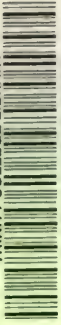


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MANY of Dr. Liddon's sermons on passages in St. Paul's Epistles have already appeared among his sermons for the chief seasons of the Christian year. This volume, like those already issued on "Old Testament Subjects" and on "Some Words of Christ," is supplementary. It contains a few sermons preached at Advent and Easter-tide, after the volumes for those seasons had been issued; but a large number belong to the Sundays after Trinity.

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SERMON I.

THE RESURRECTION: A DECLARATION OF OUR LORD'S DIVINITY.¹

ROM. i. 3, 4.

Who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

A GREAT festival of the Christian Church like Easter appears to have one drawback attending it, from which days of less importance are comparatively free. It offers us so much to think about, that, unless we try to make some one of the lessons which it teaches our own, it may pass us by without leaving us any the wiser or better for taking part in it.

The rays of truth which flash forth from a fact like the Resurrection of our Lord are so many and so bright that, if we do not fix our minds upon some one of them, and do what we may to understand its importance, we may only be dazzled into bewilderment by the splendid whole, and may carry away with us nothing that afterwards will shape our thoughts or influence our lives. And here St. Paul comes to our assistance by suggesting at the beginning of his greatest Epistle a point which may well engage our earnest attention, namely, the bearing of the Resurrection on the Divinity of our Lord. Among other things, the Resurrection, he tells us, did this: it threw a special light on the

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on Easter Day, April 6, 1890.

higher Nature of Jesus Christ. He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead.

Now, let us note for a moment that in the text St. Paul, summarily describing the contents of the Gospel, says that it was wholly concerned with Jesus Christ our Lord, and with two facts about Him more especially. The first fact: that He was really man, with a human body and a human soul. This was clear from His being a member of a particular and well-known Jewish family. According to the flesh—that is, in respect of His human nature—He was born of the seed of David. The second fact: that, although man, He was more than man. According to the Spirit of holiness—that is, in respect of His higher and superhuman Nature, He was declared to be the Son of God. The phrase, “according to the Spirit of holiness,” in the second clause, corresponds to and contrasts with the phrase, “according to the flesh,” in the first. And as the flesh in this passage certainly means human nature, and not, as often, the corrupt or animalized principle in human nature, so the Spirit of holiness means, not the Third Person in the Godhead, Who sanctifies us, but the higher or Divine Nature of Christ, somewhat vaguely described and set over against His human nature. For this less common use of the word “spirit,” we have a warrant in at least two other passages¹ of the New Testament.

The resulting sense is that, as our Lord was seen to be truly man by the fact of His birth of the family of David, so the true character and import of His higher Nature became apparent when He rose from the dead.

Here, then, is opened to us a subject of the highest interest on this the greatest of Christian festivals, when the Church throughout the world stands in spirit around the empty sepulchre proclaiming that Christ is risen from the dead. For here we are taught by the Apostle to think

¹ St. John iv. 24; Heb. ix. 14.

of the Resurrection, not only as the reversal of the humiliation and defeat which preceded it, not only as the certificate of the mission of the greatest Teacher of religion to mankind, but as something more: as a declaration, or more precisely a definition, of what in respect of His superhuman Nature Christ our Lord really was and is. The Resurrection was not only a wonder, it was an instruction; it was a means of making it plain to all who had eyes to see that He Who rose was much more than the first of prophets or apostles—that He was not less than the Only-Begotten Son of God, Who had shared God's throne and His Nature from all eternity.

I.

That which the Apostle's words may first of all suggest to us is the importance of events. He attributes to a single event the power of setting forth a great truth, just as though the event were a book or a speaker. Christ, he says, was declared to be the Son of God by the Resurrection from the dead. Undoubtedly, brethren, events are for God what language is for man—they are the means whereby God reveals His Mind and Will. Events are the language of God, written on the pages of human history, whether it be the history of a man or of a family, or of a nation, or of the world. Just as God's eternal power and Godhead are, according to the Apostle,¹ clearly understood by a reverent study of the things that are made—of the Book of Nature, so the judgments which are formed in the Divine Mind on men, families, and nations are discoverable in the book of human history, since they are written in the language of events. This, of course, will appear an unreasonable statement to those who imagine that all that happens to mankind—birth and death, sickness and health, good and bad seasons, national prosperity

¹ Rom. i. 20.

and national decline—are the result of blind forces, existing why we know not, and wherefore we know not, but which have, it seems, somehow given us existence only that, like the seaweed that is tossed this way and that on the surf of the waves, we men may illustrate their relentless power and our own abject helplessness. But it will not appear unreasonable to any man who really believes in a living God—in a God Whose rules of working are not His masters, nor yet powers which, after owing to Him their being, have escaped from His control, but only the free manifestation by Himself of that order which is the rule of His Life, Who Himself is everywhere present, everywhere and incessantly Intelligent and at work, so that by Him the hairs of our head are numbered, and without Him not a sparrow falls to the ground. To believe in a living God is to believe that events which He brings about or permits are a declaration of His Mind ; but whether the characters in which His Mind is declared are always legible by man, or by all men, is quite another question. Sometimes, indeed, they are written in a familiar alphabet ; their meaning is so clear that all men may read it. All who believe that the world is ruled by a Moral God understand what was meant by the fall of Babylon, or the capture of Rome by Alarie, or the close of the career of Napoleon. Sometimes they are written in characters as wholly unintelligible to all living men as were the Egyptian hieroglyphics half a century ago, though they may be read by the high Intelligences around the Throne in heaven, or hereafter, for all that we know, by highly endowed men on earth ; and in the book of history there is much writing of this kind, which eludes the efforts of man's inquisitive and constant gaze. But sometimes, also, the meaning of God's writing in events is hidden from the mass of men at first sight, but becomes plain to them when the key to its interpretation has been given them by a

competent instructor ; like the *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, traced on the wall of the banqueting chamber of the Eastern monarch, the sense of which was plain when a Daniel had been summoned to decipher it. Of such handwriting as this, too, history is full ; but we must not linger on it, since we have to fix our attention on one great sample of it—on a particular event, the Resurrection of our Lord.

Now, that a strictly supernatural occurrence such as the Resurrection would have a special meaning, or several meanings, is surely an obvious supposition ; the odd thing would be, if such an event could occur without any purpose or meaning at all. And St. Paul tells us what, in his inspired judgment, that meaning was ; it was to declare that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

Endeavour, my brethren, to think what sort of impression would be created in your minds if, after following to the grave one whom you had dearly loved for many years, and after listening to the last office of the Church, and watching the sod as it was thrown in upon the coffin, you should see that same friend or relative enter your room, with the old aspect, the well-known figure and expression, the accustomed voice, remaining just long enough to assure you that he was here again, and then passing swiftly away to comfort and encourage some other mourner. And yet this is what did happen in substance to Mary Magdalen and the holy women, and Peter and James, and the two disciples and the ten, on the day of our Lord's rising from the dead. Such an event could not but be of great significance. Even if the risen one should not utter a word, the mere appearance of such a visitor would be pregnant with meaning ; it would declare a great deal that at first we should find it hard to put into words about the unseen world and this, about life and death, about the ways of God, about the destiny of man.

You will allow this and much more. But why, you may ask, should our Lord's Resurrection have the higher and particular effect of declaring Him to be the Son of God? Others, you may urge, had visited the realms of death, and returned to life, who were not declared by this awful experience to be Divine: we need not travel beyond the bounds of the Gospel History in order to meet with the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus of Bethany. Certainly in their cases restoration to life was a signal mark of the Divine favour; but it left them as it found them, only members of the human family, and still subject to the law of death. What was it in our Lord's case which invested His Resurrection with this declaratory or defining force which the Apostle ascribes to it?

The answer is, first of all, that the Resurrection of our Lord was a verification of the proof which He had offered of His own claim.

The Jewish doctors had understood the words in the psalm addressed to Messiah, "Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee," not only of His being before all worlds, as it is understood in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but also of His rising from the dead; and in this sense it is employed by St. Paul in that wonderful appeal to the Jewish conscience which he made in the Synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia.¹ And therefore, our Lord, knowing what was involved in the claim to be Messiah, foretold His Resurrection certainly on six, probably on more occasions: and it was in this fulfilment of His own prediction—a prediction based upon the deeper sense of the ancient Scriptures—that St. Paul recognized a declaration of the Divine Sonship of Christ. The Resurrection was an intervention of the Almighty Father in behalf of His Well-beloved Son; it was an assertion by the Son of His real relation with the Father; it was a proof that the

¹ Heb. i. 5; Acts xiii. 33.

uncertainties of the future and the laws of the physical world were alike subject to His supreme control ; it was an event, in the manner of its accomplishment, so altogether exceptional and striking that the Apostle's appeal to it as declaratory of our Lord's Divinity is, if the expression might be allowed, only natural. Christ Himself had summoned the widow's son to rise from the bier, and Lazarus to issue from the recesses of the tomb ; but no form of majesty or power stood by His grave, no voice of authority was heard to speak when before the dawn His human Soul, returning from the regions of the dead, reunited itself with the holy Body that lay in the sepulchre, and passed forth into the world of living men. The manner of His Resurrection was a declaration that He Who had died and was buried was the Son of God.

But further, in our Lord's case the Resurrection did not stand alone. It is abstractedly conceivable that the foolish or the bad might be raised from the dead by super-human power: one day, we Christians know, they will be, in order to give an account of the things done in the body. In our Lord's case Resurrection from the dead was combined with absolute holiness and wisdom, with words such as never man spake, with a life which none who witnessed it could convince of sin, in short, with a manifestation of truth and goodness which had never before been given to mankind. The Resurrection was the fitting complement to the Life and Teaching of our Lord ; it confirmed the anticipations which that life and teaching naturally raised ; it was the countersign in the sphere of physical being to a judgment which had already been formed in the sphere of instructed conscience. Had our Lord lived and taught, and then rotted in His grave, even His life would have died away in time from the memories of men ; had He risen—it is an impossible supposition—without such a life and

teaching, His Resurrection would have been a blank wonder, appealing only to the imagination, and saying nothing to the sense of right and truth. As it is, it proclaims to all the world what disciples, like Peter at Cæsarea Philippi,¹ had owned before at their Master's feet; it proclaims that He Who was crucified, dead, and buried, is the Son of God, declared to be such by His Resurrection from the dead.

II.

But the Apostle says that this declaration of the Divine Sonship of Christ, which was made by His Resurrection, was made with power. The Resurrection did not hesitatingly suggest that our Lord might possibly be the Son of God; it amounted, when taken together with the life and character and teaching of our Lord, to a demonstration, irresistible and overwhelming—at least, for the Apostle himself—that our Lord was the Son of God.

I say for the Apostle himself, because, looking at the whole connection of the passage, it is scarcely open to doubt that the expression "with power" points first of all to a personal experience.

Saul of Tarsus, at that time an active young Rabbi in Jerusalem, strongly attached to the cause of the Pharisaic party, was not one of the privileged company to whom the Risen Redeemer showed Himself during the Great Forty Days. As an unconverted Jew, he would have looked at the Person and work of Jesus through an atmosphere discoloured by false reports and by implacable controversial passion. For Saul the Rabbi, Jesus was only a teacher who had learnt the trick of winning access to the popular ear, and had established for himself in the minds of the uneducated many the character and authority of a prophet; a teacher, moreover, whose influence

¹ St. Matt. xvi. 16.

was directed against that of the representatives of the established order of things in Jerusalem, and who had only met with his deserts when he was put to a cruel death by the Roman authorities. The tragedy, no doubt, he would have said at the time, would be a nine days' wonder; and then other persons and subjects of interest would come to the front, and all would be forgotten. Nor would this judgment have been disturbed by the rumours which may have reached his ear, that there had been one or more apparitions of Jesus after His death; Saul's robust scepticism would have whispered to itself that rumours of this sort were only to be expected among the credulous and disappointed followers whom Jesus had misled, and were not deserving of serious consideration. And so he would have gone on his way in his bitter sincerity, even going so far as to place himself at the disposal of the persecuting party which filled the highest places in the Jewish priesthood, and to take a foremost part in the cruelties by which it was hoped to stamp out the very name of the infant Church. And then came the journey to Damascus, and that scene among the low hills of the desert some eight miles or so from the city gate, which was to change the foremost persecutor of Christ into the most devoted of His Apostles. And what was it which that scene brought home with irresistible power to the mind of Saul of Tarsus? Many truths, no doubt, but this pre-eminently, that Jesus, of Whom he had dreamt as stricken and silenced for ever in the stillness and corruption of the tomb, was alive, and was ruling men and events from the clouds of heaven. And how and since what date this had come to be Saul would have learnt from Ananias of Damascus, and still more when he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and could cross-question first one Apostle and then another, James and Thomas and the penitent and radiant Magdalen, and the two disciples of the walk

to Emmaus, and as many as he would, while in Galilee on the road, of those five hundred who had seen the Risen Lord on a single occasion. Of the great fact there was evidence enough and to spare, if only there was a mind open to receive it; and when the fact that Jesus Who was crucified had thus risen from the dead the third day was established in the mind of Paul as a certainty beyond all discussion, how inevitably would it have changed his way of looking at all else about Jesus! It was, then, Jesus, and not himself or his instructors, Who held the key to the true sense of the ancient Scriptures; it was the teaching of Jesus, and not that of the Rabbinical Schools, which followed on in the direct line of Moses and the Prophets. Those miracles of Jesus at which, with other Pharisees, he had, no doubt, scoffed, were only what might be expected in the heir of the Messianic prophecies, and this crowning wonder of all, which Jesus had predicted as designed to follow on His Death, lifted yet further the veil that hung before the eyes of the astonished and humbled Rabbi, and showed that He Who could thus make the past and the present alike minister to His glory; He Who could rule at once in the conscience of man, and mould at pleasure the forces of nature; He Who could lie as a corpse in the darkness of the grave, and then, speaking from the heavens, could bend into utter submission the mind and will of His stoutest adversary;—must be indeed of more than human stature, must be indeed Divine. To St. Paul the Resurrection was a revelation of the Son of God with power.

If to St. Paul, much more, we may well think, to those who saw the Risen Lord once and again—saw Him, conversed with Him, ate with Him, touched Him. Such, certainly, was the effect on that Apostle, who was, it might seem, naturally of a sceptical turn of mind, although, as the Collect says, for the greater confirmation of the Faith

he was doubtful of Christ's Resurrection. What was Thomas's exclamation when our Lord offered His Hands and His Side to the inquisitive touch of His Apostle? "My Lord and my God!" Those five sacred Wounds in the Risen Body were a revelation, not of Christ's manhood only, but of His Deity, since they proclaimed the veiled power which had conquered death.

And so it has been ever since. The Resurrection has been felt to be the fact which, beyond all others, proclaims Christ as the Son of God with power. When Judas went his way, the important requisite in his successor was that he was to be a witness to the Resurrection. The Resurrection was the burden of all the recorded preaching of the earliest Church; the Gospel which it preached was a Gospel of the Resurrection—whether in the mouth of Peter, or Stephen, or Paul, it was the same. And at this moment, all who think seriously about the matter know that the Resurrection is the point at which the Creed, which carries us to the heights of heaven, is most securely embedded in the soil of earth, most thoroughly capable of asserting a place for its Divine and living Subject in the history of our race. Disprove the Resurrection, and Christianity fades away into the air as a graceful but discredited illusion: but while it lasts it does its work as at the first; more than any other event, it proclaims Christ to be the Son of God with power in millions of Christian souls.

It is said, I know, that a wonder of this kind, however calculated to impress the mind of bygone generations, is not likely to weigh powerfully with our own, and on the ground that we of to-day are less struck by suspensions of natural law than by the unvarying order of nature. Every age, no doubt, has its fashions, in the world of thought and literature no less than in the world of manners and dress; and if we survey a sufficient range of time we shall

see that these fashions in thought are—many of them—not less liable to have their day and be discarded than are others. Nor need a man be a prophet in order to predict that the fashion which professes to attach less importance to a proved fact which suspends natural law, whether by the intervention of a higher law or otherwise, than to the general course and regularity of nature will not last. Of course, if a man says that no such suspension of natural law, no miracle, is possible, the question is a different and in a sense a more important one; but I am thinking of people who say that they deny neither the possibility nor the occurrence of miracle, and yet point with satisfaction to the fashionable temper of the time, which does not think highly of the importance of miracle. Such a fashion, I say, will pass, if only because it is out of harmony with the average common sense of human nature.

When does a fellow-man arrest our attention? Is it when he is acting as is his wont, or when he is acting in some manner which we did not anticipate—excelling himself, as we say, or falling below himself; a good man, as we thought, letting his mouth speak wickedness, or being partaker with an adulteress; or a bad man, as we held him, rising to the heights of generosity or self-sacrifice; a wise man committing himself for a moment to some startling folly; or a foolish man uttering some opinion, the value of which commands the respect of the wise? And when the Ruler of the Universe suspends for a moment His wonted rule of working by such a miracle as raising the dead, the importance of His act will not be disposed of by a passing mood of thought, which, fresh from laboratories and observatories, thinks more of law than of suspensions of law. No; our Lord's Resurrection is an occurrence which will declare to our children, as it has declared to our forefathers, the Divine Sonship of Jesus, and it will do this, as it has done it hitherto, with

power. We know what death is ; we have known, most of us, at some moment in our lives, what we would have given to be able to break its chain when wound round those we have loved ; and in the light or memory of this experience we may own the true Majesty of Him Who liveth and was dead, and behold, He is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death.¹

III.

But there is another sense in which the Resurrection from the dead is a declaration with power that Jesus is the Son of God.

No one can read St. Paul's Epistles without observing that he constantly speaks of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, not only as events in the life of Jesus on earth, but as spiritual transactions which take place in the Christian soul or character. He bids Christians crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts.² He says of himself, "I am crucified with Christ."³ Addressing his readers at Ephesus, he quotes a Christian hymn of the earliest age—

"Awake, thou that sleepest,
And arise from the dead,
And Christ shall give thee light."⁴

He exclaims in this day's Epistle to the Colossians, "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above."⁵

It is true that this language of St. Paul is more particularly connected with the entrance of new converts into the Christian Church by baptism. Conversion had involved a crucifixion of the old corrupt nature ; and then, as the convert was dipped beneath the baptismal waters and

¹ Rev. i. 18.

² Gal. v. 24.

³ Gal. ii. 20.

⁴ Eph. v. 14.

⁵ Col. iii. 1.

raised again by the minister of the Sacrament, he was, in St. Paul's words, "buried with Christ in baptism, and raised again to newness of life."¹ But although this is the first and more usual application of the Apostle's language, it also applies to the circumstances of the later life of baptized Christians who have fallen from grace, and who need to return to God by a fresh conversion. If the Body of Christ could only rise once from the grave, yet the Christian soul may need to rise a second time; nay, after a fall from grace such a resurrection is imperative, unless all is to be lost. And when such an event in the moral or spiritual world takes place, think you that they who look on do not learn from it something that they had not known before about the Son of God?

Is it nothing that a soul should lie in the grave of sin, and then, touched by a mighty inspiring Force bidding it arise and live, should pass forth to a new life of freedom and purity? So it has been sometimes in youth, sometimes in middle life, sometimes in declining years, almost within sight of death, with men of the most opposite characters, in the most various positions, whose experiences of sin and its miseries had been as unlike as possible. So it was in one age with Augustine, at once a man of cultivation and a libertine, whom one verse of an Epistle of St. Paul's made a saint and a teacher of the Church. So it was with the profligate Earl of Rochester, in the days of the Restoration. So, in our own—to cite instances only in another land—with the popular French atheist, Taxil, who devoted years to propagating blasphemies against his Creator and Redeemer; or with Littré, the polished man of letters, from whose mental atmosphere, almost until the last hour had come, God was shut out by a false philosophy. For each of these—the profligate young philosopher, the debauched courtier, the atheistic lecturer, the refined

¹ Rom. vi. 4.

but godless man of letters—God had His purpose and His hour of mercy, and each accepted it.

You may, some of you must, have known men, the bearers of less famous names, or living in private life, who have been subjects, too, of a spiritual resurrection. We may see dead souls joined to bodies of great activity and vigour, aye, and to minds of high intelligence and force; but not on that account the less dead. Such a soul lies in the grave of sin; it is blind, deaf, dumb, motionless, cold, putrid; it sees not the works of God in providence and life, His mercies, His judgments; it hears not the warnings of God in His Word, His Church, His incessant appeals to conscience; it speaks not to God in prayer; it has neither the clear-sightedness nor the heart to pray; it stirs not one single power or faculty in the way of obedience; it is cold—so cold as to strike into any that touch it a deadly chill; aye, and like Lazarus, it is become putrid, so long has it lain in its grave. And when such a soul hears the voice of the Son of God; when its eyes open to behold His justice and His love; when it opens its ears to listen to His warnings and His promises, opens its mouth to pray and to praise Him as the Author and Redeemer and Sanctifier of its new life; when such a soul exchanges its corruption for purity, its coldness for the glow of warm affections, bursts the bondages of habit which are wrapped around it in its grave, and passes forth through the barriers that would fain detain it into light and freedom; when men around behold this, and note, further, how in such a soul love takes the place of hatred, and joy of sullen discontent, and peace of the restlessness of a bad conscience, and long-suffering of an impatience that knew no bounds, and gentleness and meekness of fierce self-assertion, and faith of a distrust alike of man and God, and temperance of a chaos of insurgent passions; when they see the man

who dwelt yesterday among the graves of lust sitting to-day among the pure, clothed and in his right mind ;—and ask Who has done it ? Who has thus changed that which offers to His Will a much more stubborn resistance than the dust of a buried corpse or the stone which closes the mouth of a sepulchre ?—it is clear what must be the answer. Who but He Who, at the grave at Bethany, announcing himself as the Resurrection and the Life, did bid Lazarus come forth from his tomb, and Whose own Resurrection is not merely an outward fact to mould our thoughts, but an inward power to transform wills and characters ?

When the old Christians whom Saul of Tarsus had so cruelly wronged beheld his converted life, his clear intelligence, his warm affections, his free and strong will all placed at the service of the Saviour Whom he had persecuted, what did they do ? St. Paul himself shall answer : “ They glorified God in me.”¹ And when in the Church of our day a soul rises from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, there goes forth, be sure of it, into hundreds or thousands of consciences around, a proclamation of the Divine Power of the Son of God.

God grant that this Easter the Heart of the Risen and glorified Jesus may be gladdened by many such a moral resurrection ; and that we who witness or who experience it may know more and more surely, to our endless peace, Who He is and what He can do.

¹ Gal. i. 24.

S. Peter's, Featherstone. Good Friday morn 5 April 1901. notes Ref
all the scarb. 4th Sunday in Lent 7 March 1902.
S. Oswald's Fily 23rd S. after Trinity. 6 Nov 1904.

SERMON II.

THE FOOLISHNESS AND THE POWER OF THE CROSS.

I Cor. i. 18.

The preaching of the Cross is to them which perish foolishness; but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

ON this day we cross the line which naturally divides the earlier from the later part of Lent. Until now we ought to have been lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, and praying that gracious Father, Who hateth nothing that He has made, to create and make in us new and contrite hearts. Henceforward, we raise our eyes from the dust more frequently, more earnestly, to One Whose Passion encourages us to raise them with confidence to heaven. The days of penitence still continue; but it is penitence rendered deeper, yet more hopeful, by the sights and voices of the Passion. Jesus Christ crucified is the warrant of our obtaining of the God of all mercy perfect remission and forgiveness; and, in the order of the Church seasons, His Cross is already coming each day more and more prominently into view. Only next week does the subject formally enter into the appointed services; but if on Mid-Lent Sunday we give some consideration to the relations of human souls towards it, we are not altogether wanting to the guidance of the season, and the matter is too important to be at any time out of place in Christian hearts.

¹ Preached in the Private Chapel of Lambeth Palace, on the Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 7, 1869.

St. Paul describes the word of the Cross of Christ as at once, in the judgment of men, foolishness and power. He stated more epigrammatically in the text what he expands with greater particularity elsewhere. "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a scandal and to the Greeks a folly; but to them which are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."¹ In the same sense he speaks of God's saving them that believe through the foolishness of—not the art, but the substance—of Christian preaching. So the Apostolical preachers are fools for Christ's sake; and in the text, the word of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us who are the saved it is the power of God.

I.

The preaching—it should be, the word of the Cross—first of all, is folly. Such was the estimate of the majority of men respecting it in the days of the Apostles. It said nothing to them that they could connect with received theories; it did violence to prepossessions which ruled them. And to put forward this word of the Cross, this history of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as the prominent feature of Christian doctrine, was, in their eyes, to be indifferent to the plainest dictates of common sense.

1. Let us suppose that a Greek of the Apostolic Age, who had had opportunities of making himself master of the main features of Christian doctrine, had been able to explain his reasons to the Apostle for thinking the preaching of the Cross a folly. Would he not have said something of this kind?

'There is a great deal in your new religion which is not without its attractions to us Greeks. Where we decline to pronounce upon the question of truth, we are willing enough to recognize ideal beauty, or that which

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

approaches it. Such a figure as that of the beloved disciple; such a doctrine as that of the Incarnate Wisdom; such an Apotheōsis of Humanity as that implied in the Ascension; such a future of raptures as the new heavens and new earth of your Apocalypse:—these are among the features of your religion which might command, if not our entire assent, yet assuredly some large sympathetic interest. And if your Master's teaching is at issue with our social conceptions and our passion for beauty in human life, if it is condemnatory of our tenderness to sensual enjoyment, yet it has, in part no doubt, a grandeur of its own, and we see and almost approve an ideal which we do not imitate. But then you seem bent upon outraging our most delicate susceptibilities. Else why should you place in the very forefront of your teaching the story and symbol of your Master's degradation and punishment; why should you flaunt before the refinement and fastidiousness of the children of Plato and of Epicurus, the mangled figure of the Teacher to whom you owe your philosophy, dying amid a storm of official and popular insult, naked and writhing upon a gory scaffold? Our Socrates, taking the hemlock, passes out of life gracefully and quietly; but your Jesus in His last agonies does nothing for speculative inquiry, while His sufferings are offensive to our sense of æsthetic beauty. Draw a veil, then, over this portion of your Master's history unless you would bungle into the capital mistake of failing to understand the sympathies of your audience; unless you would secure your credit for historical veracity at the expense of our opinion of your good taste.'

2. And if a Roman of the Apostolic Age had had occasion to express his opinion, his reasons for criticizing the preaching of the Cross would have differed from those of the Greek; but his conclusion would have been to all intents and purposes the same.

'Your Master's history,' he would have said, 'and your Master's teaching contain elements which present considerable attractions to us. That plan of a world-wide Empire which you call the Kingdom of Heaven is in harmony with our traditional efforts and aspirations; though your Empire belongs to the sphere of conscience, ours to that of material and political force. And we understand the practical moral value of your self-mortifying and self-conquering code of conduct; we admire your determination at the outset of your history to base a strong unvarying organization upon a living principle, and to animate every member of your society with a military devotion to an unseen Captain. Above all, we could comprehend, if we do no more, your insistence upon your doctrine of the Resurrection of your Master; you are right thus to make the most of His supposed victory, and to hold up well before the eyes of men the Force which sustains you. But when you draw public attention to Christ's death upon the Cross, you fairly astonish us. You do two things: you outrage our instinct of social order, and you trifle with our settled contempt for all forms of failure and weakness. Hanging on the Cross, He is in our eyes an offender against society, whom society has crushed with a strong, stern hand in the interests of law and order. And, if you plead that He was really innocent of any anti-social crime, we cannot undertake to second the championship of your private protests against the practical verdict of the public; we prefer to interpret His antecedents by the event. In any case, if He was really right, why could He not defeat the plans of His enemies? His humiliation is, in our eyes, fatal to the reverence which you invite on His behalf. If you thus insist upon setting forth the scaffold on which, and the agonies and shame amid which He died, you must not be surprised if, a few years hence, our philoso-

phical historians pronounce your religion, as a whole, a destructive superstition ; while even now we cannot but consider the prominence which you give to such a topic a proof of unpractical folly.'

3. And if a Jew could have followed these explanations up, what would he have said ?

'In my judgment,' he would have said, 'your preaching a crucified Rabbi is only a piece of folly, because it is something more—it is a religious scandal. If He had confined Himself to enforcing the Ancient Law, even the least popular and acceptable of its precepts, He would never have died on Calvary. If even He had freely and publicly denounced the vices and hypocrisies of powerful classes, no doubt He would have made bitter enemies, and if He had fallen only as a victim to their vengeance and to His own moral courage, we could understand admiration for His conduct and sympathy for His fate. But how stands the historical fact ? He advanced personal pretensions which no religious member of our nation could admit without sanctioning an odious blasphemy. If He was what He distinctly claimed to be, we have to reconsider what is meant by the First Commandment in our Decalogue ; but, if such a proof were needed, His ignominious death sufficiently disposes of His outrageous claim. Henceforth that tragedy is for ever associated in our minds with the failure of a fanatic who would fain have substituted the love and worship of Himself for the faith of Isaiah, of David, of the Patriarchs ; and yet you bid defiance to all that is deepest in our religious convictions, as well as to the sense and verdict of the historical event, by your preaching Jesus crucified. We very greatly understate our estimate of your conduct, when we characterize it as foolishness ; since, in our eyes, it is an offence against something higher than practical wisdom—against religious light and truth.'

4. And now let us suppose that it was possible for the Apostle to be addressed across the centuries by some representative of the ruling temper of our own day, still bearing the Christian name, but sitting loosely, not to say being somewhat hostile to a great deal of the vital truth and essence of Apostolical Christianity. Or let him, to avoid the historical violence, address the Apostles in the persons of their successors. What would he say of the preaching of the Cross ?

‘Christianity,’ he begins by remarking, ‘has undoubtedly done a great deal for man ; it has largely endowed him with the ideas and the institutions, with the governing type and the informing spirit of our modern, that is to say, of the highest human civilization. But Christianity has herself educated us sufficiently to criticize her ; and, as a whole, she is no longer in harmony with the children of her care. Our science is impatient of her miracles ; our experimental philosophies teach us to scan with sceptical rigour her confident proclamations of an unseen world ; our theories of society and of human conduct are in conflict with her disguised or avowed asceticism ; and in particular we cannot enter into her glorification of an archetypal suffering. She exposes human torture throned on the Cross, and invites a puzzled and reluctant world to bend before it in enthusiasm, in adoration ; whereas we relieve suffering whenever we can, and when we cannot relieve we make a point of forgetting it. We bury it out of our sight, with all its harrowing detail, with all its physical offensiveness ; and we do not wish to have it thrust upon our notice even with an Apostolical certificate of its wholesomeness or of its necessity. A religion of the shambles may have suited the barbarous feudal ages ; for us a religion of the skies, if any, is the only possible, and Christianity must make up her mind to take us as we are. If she can make a friend of our criticism and our

prejudices ; if she can eliminate from her Creed and from her Gospels all that is out of harmony with the easy, sunny, sceptical moods of our modern educated life, she may yet be the religion of cultivated Europe. But it is plain that to preach the Cross among us in the Apostolical sense, would be simple folly—downright infatuation.’

‘For, with the Apostles,’ the modern continues, ‘the Cross is not merely or chiefly the symbol of an unmerited suffering. It is the central point of a vast transaction, whereby heaven and earth are said to be reconciled, and man is brought into a new fellowship with God. It is the Altar whereon a sacrifice is offered, so infinitely costly, so irresistibly prevailing, that the millions of humanity who, through the coming ages, shall kneel before it, to be sprinkled with the Victim’s Blood, shall be washed, sanctified, justified, accepted in the sight of heaven. This Victim Who, after taking our sins solemnly upon Him, bears them in His own Body, to the Tree of Shame, is the main actor in a mystery which is altogether out of keeping with our modern thought. To preach it among us must be to presume upon our indifference ; and if our indifference and not our indignation is to frame our judgment, what can we deem it to be but excessive folly ?’

St. Paul does not seem so much to condemn the judgment of the world as to register it accurately. That the world should judge as it does of the preaching of the Cross is perfectly natural. The world might seem for the time being to be sincerely interested in the success of the gospel, and, by its energetic phrase, “the preaching of the Cross is folly,” to be giving the Apostles a piece of sound and practical advice.

II.

To common sense and at first sight, the preaching of the Cross is folly. If we recommend a scheme, we do so by

making the most of its strong points, by insisting that it has succeeded and will succeed, by presenting it in a light which conciliates the prejudices of those who are opposed to it. The preaching of the Cross sets these canons of practical prudence at defiance ; it loads a tale of suffering, repulsive to the sympathies of the world, with a mystical doctrine as to the import and value of this suffering still less acceptable to the world's understanding. Nevertheless, St. Paul contends that if the Cross preached is folly, it is also power ; and to understand his exact meaning in this expression is a point deserving our most earnest attention.

What are the forms of power which control the lives of men most entirely in the world around us ?

There is material power in its three chief forms—capital, political influence, and the sword. It is plain enough that neither of these has aught in common with the power of the Cross. Gold, as the poet said, can penetrate a crowd of courtiers, and can even blast the rocks ; and gold can, and in our own day does, subserve the outward action and apparatus of religion very effectively. But gold cannot buy hearts, consciences, convictions. Simon Magus attempted, to his loss, to bridge the gulf which severs the realm of spiritual life and power from the money-market. And political influence, though it may control the fortunes of a Church, and foster a truth or an error, as the case may be, yet it cannot create what it thus manipulates any more than a nurse can breathe life into a dead child, or—to use St. Paul's own simile for all human agency about and around the spiritual kingdom of Christ—any more than a gardener can communicate vegetable life to the plants which he waters and prunes.¹ As for the sword, it has inflicted upon religious men bodily tortures and death when wielded by their enemies, and worse wounds than these upon the Church herself, when the Church has so far

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 4-7.

forgotten the precepts of Christ as to think to use such a weapon in His behalf. But it is in no sense a spiritual power except as having capacities for harm. The submissions which it has enforced have been the tribute of fear, not the voice of conscience.

Had God willed it, He might, of course, have subdued the world to the religion of His Son by a single exercise of Will. As He said in the beginning, "Let there be light," and there was light, so He might have said at the Incarnation, "Let all men know and love and adore the Incarnate Word," and it must have been so. But in this case the Gospel would have been based, like the planets and the mountains, upon an exercise of Divine Might; it would have belonged to the material rather than to the moral department of creation. God willed to reign over creatures whom He had endowed with moral freedom, and who, in the exercise of that freedom, should choose Him for their King. This could not have been if God, Who in His strength setteth fast the mountains and is girded about with power, had crushed the human conscience down into a purely passive obedience to the truth of the Gospel.

Far higher than any natural power is the power of mind, of cultured mind. As the centuries pass, this power increases in the extent and intensity of its empire. And who would deny that if the purse, the sceptre, and the sword, may in their sphere and measure become allies of the Cross on its missions throughout the world, intellect is an ally, more congenial, more kindred in its nature and action, more persuasive in its advocacy? But many men have conceived, and do conceive, of the Faith of Christ simply and exclusively as the monument of an intellectual victory over the superstitious and shortcomings of earlier religious thought. The Creed is for them the verdict of a jury of thinkers, who have arrived, at least for the time being and provisionally, at intellectual truth on the

subject of religion. Now, although Christianity does say much to, and can, within the limits which the subject imposes, even satisfy altogether the highest intellect; to represent it as only or mainly an intellectual system, received by disciplined and cultivated reason, is to close the eyes to history and to make a still graver mistake as to the Divine Character. As a matter of fact, Christianity did not make its way by a series of incisive and irresistible demonstrations through the thicket of tangled errors which it found flourishing in the soil of human thought. Its first recruits, as at Corinth, so elsewhere, were men of the people, earnest and loving, but without intellectual culture. And this, because Christianity was to embrace the world, and therefore the larger part of it, that is to say, the uneducated masses. If the perception of its truth had depended upon the appreciation of a long and intricate argument, Christianity might, no doubt, have been the combining principle, the very soul of a literary club; but it would have sent the multitudes empty away when they came for comfort and blessing to the Feet of the Redeemer.

It may be true—it is true—that in the present day there are questions between Church and Church, questions of vast importance, and only to be settled by a patient investigation into history, into the sources of doctrine, into the moral worth of separate and combined facts; but even here the masses of men incline to this or that communion, for moral, or at least social, rather than intellectual reasons. In the first days of the Church, too, no doubt there were arguments and demonstrations in the background for those who could understand, for those who might require them. There were arguments like those of the Epistle to the Romans or the Epistle to the Hebrews, showing in Christ crucified the Wisdom or the Righteousness of God—arguments which for intricacy and subtlety might be matched with any

products of the Greek intellect. But to the masses the Church's message, always and for all identical in substance and result, was simpler in form. To the people the Apostles said simply, vehemently, again and again, "We preach the Crucified." "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The event has shown that this story of an execution was a lever with which twelve simple men could revolutionize the world; but the leverage was not, could not from the nature of the case have been, mainly intellectual.

There is a third power, stronger and more universally felt than political or mental power among men—and that is moral power. When St. Paul says that the preaching of the Cross is the power of God to us who are being saved, may he not, does he not mean this?

Let us remark, brethren, that the condensed phrase, the word of the Cross, means something more than a statement of the historical fact that Jesus of Nazareth was put to death by being crucified. It means something more than the narrative of so much mental suffering, so much physical suffering, so many insults, blows, wounds, expressions of agony, hours of endurance. It implies the previous settlement of a very obvious and vital question, upon the answer to which the real interest of such preaching must mainly depend, "Who is the Crucified One?"

The answer to this question is, first, that He is a perfectly Sinless Being; that He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; that He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, not ideally or by official presumption, but as a hard matter of historical fact. But secondly, the answer is that He is not only Sinless in Himself, but Representative of the race; that He is the Idea of Humanity realized in the concrete; that all that is strong, beautiful, tender, thoughtful, wise, in the great human family, meets in Him Who is its very prime and

flower. This is what St. Paul means by his characteristic doctrine of the Second Adam, the Antitype of our first father, Who could cut off the entail of misery and sin, because He stood in a relation to all who were to be united to Him as truly parental in the New Covenant, as was Adam's in that of the Old. But thirdly, the answer is that the Personality in Christ which underlies the features, the outward mien and bodily form, and even the endowments and faculties of a perfect human soul, is altogether distinct from, though for ever one with, His manhood, that it is Pre-existent, Eternal, Divine; that in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, with that sensible reality which men attach to the presence of a material body. The preaching of the Cross is the preaching of crucified innocence; it is the preaching of crucified humanity, and of humanity crucified in its one true Representative; it is the preaching of the Crucifixion of the Lord of Glory.

These truths, the Innocence of Christ, the Representative Character of His Manhood, and His real Divinity, are altogether necessary to explain what the Apostles say respecting the atoning and sacrificial character of His Death. Into that vast and most important subject it would be impossible to enter to-day; the question before us now is not, What are the exact effects of the crucifixion? but, What is the secret of its power over the hearts of men?

Now, the answer to this is, that it has the closest affinity with the reception of three great moral truths in the soul which receives it. It implies and requires them, in order to be understood at all, in order to be anything more than a dry historic fact, or a strange weird fragment of mysticism. And when it is received, it in turn fortifies and rivets the reception of these truths; it makes them living realities, in thought and practice; they are the elements of that moral power, which God puts forth through the preaching of the Cross, to draw human souls into communion with Himself.

(a) Of these truths, the first is the Divine Holiness. When the question is asked, Why did Jesus die? the first of the ultimate answers is, Because God is Holy.

Men often ask whether a Holy God could not have redeemed the world without the death of His Son? We dare not limit His Omnipotence; yet we have no really sufficient reasons for answering so tremendous a question in the affirmative. But, if the Apostles had preached God's forgiveness of human sin without the Cross, would the conscience of man have believed them? And, if not, why not? Because the conscience of man, whatever else it had lost, believed at bottom that God's Sanctity required some reparation for sin.

It may be urged that the Jewish Psalmists believed in the forgiveness of sins when the Atonement was yet to come. But if God revealed this truth directly to some saintly souls, He implied it by a yearly ceremony, which had a first claim on every Israelite—the sacrifices on the great Day of Atonement. The Israelite could not explain the solemn transactions of that day of days without encountering the solemn truth of the unalterable Holiness of God. Prophets, indeed, might be taught, and might teach, that the blood of animal victims could not really remove stains from the human soul; but those sacrifices could and did declare a truth—eternal and of the first importance—namely, that God does require satisfaction for sin, that sin introduces a state of things before God which must be reversed by an act as definite as that which introduced it; that, to speak with reverence, God is not free to dispense with the moral laws which govern Himself, or rather which are His Essential Being, and that if these are violated, some reparation is strictly indispensable.

The voluntary offering of Himself to anguish and to death by the Eternal Son becomes intelligible when we place it in the light of this tremendous and unyielding law.

He stands, the Sinless One, in the forefront of sinful humanity, and He offers to the Divine Sanctity, on behalf of a race which He represents, the highest expression of an obedient will. Henceforth each member of that race, who by faith and love on one side, and by Divine gifts on the other, is really united to the self-sacrificing Christ, has an assured ground of confidence in facing the awful Sanctity of God. This statement of the Christian doctrine appeals to the deepest and most legitimate instincts of conscience, and is justified in a ratio exactly proportioned to the soul's perception of the existence of a perfectly Holy Being, and of the exigencies of His Sanctity.

The rudest of pagan altars, and the truest breathings of a Christian heart, coincide in affirming the solemn truth, stated in the collect for this very Sunday, that "man for his evil deeds does worthily deserve to be punished," and that sin must be atoned for somehow, if God is still to be, in the moral sense, God.

Here, indeed, we touch upon one of the deepest reasons why so many men in our day account the preaching of the Cross foolishness. The moral want which it satisfies, the moral idea which explains it, have been enfeebled or killed. There are among us men who still name the name of the Sinless Christ, from whose minds the very idea and outline of a real sanctity has altogether died out, and along with the idea of sanctity, the antithetical idea of sin.

Instead of sanctity they have before their minds a social standard of propriety; instead of the idea of sin, the conception of anti-social vice, of such sorts of vice as come under the notice of public human law as threatening society with ruin or inconvenience. With these stunted moral conceptions, they naturally do not see why a Holy God should not forgive sin without exacting a compensation; they really proceed upon the idea of sin being only a personal affront against God, and as if it argued an

ungenerous pettiness and over-sensitiveness in Him to notice it in such insignificant agents as we are. They insist, indeed, that God is a loving Father; but they mean that He is a very weak Parent, Who indulges His children in what is wrong because He has no fixed principles of His own from which He cannot swerve in ruling them. The moral difference between those who believe in the revealed doctrine and those who deny it ~~are~~ deeper than the doctrinal one; and when the doctrine of Christ crucified is accepted, it lights up a world of moral truth which before was in the twilight or in the darkness; it reveals the awful, the blessed Sanctity of God.

(β) But the preaching of the Cross also proclaims God's Love. We are told that nature proclaims it sufficiently; that human life is a long exposition and commentary upon it; and that a death of agony is a superfluous, even ~~if~~ it could be an effective, echo of the voice of nature. That God's mercies are over all His works is indeed certain to faith; but is the Love of God always traceable in this world, when natural Reason undertakes to trace it? Are there, then, no calamities so dark, no sorrows so piercing as to obscure the sense of a loving God, if Nature only is to declare Him?

Must we not all sometimes close our eyes and trust where we dare not attempt to see? In many lives must not this be done again and again, almost by a continuous series of acts extending through years of darkness and suffering? And is it true that the darker problems of human life are relieved by the contemplation of the animal world? Who that has read Humboldt's celebrated description of the roar of the forest on the banks of the Amazon after nightfall, and reflects that that roar represents the agony of millions of sensitive creatures endeavouring to escape from a cruel and torturing death, but must feel that there are in this world things which, apart from the light

shed on them by the Christian creed, might easily suggest dark thoughts of the Being Who has made and Who rules it? Now, as the Cross reveals God's Holiness, so it makes us certain of His Love. Our Lord's teaching that God is Love, our Lord's miracles of mercy, did not reveal the real Heart of God so effectively as did the Cross. For love in its essence is the sacrifice of self, and the Cross on which hangs the Eternal Son of God is Self-sacrifice pushed to the height of a sublime exaggeration.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet even for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."¹ "He is made sin for us Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."² "And thus the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if He died for all then were all dead, and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again."³

Thus it is that as no man can sincerely believe in the Apostolical account of Jesus crucified without believing in the Sanctity of God, so no man can believe in that account without also believing in His Love. The Cross is the cure for all the sin, all the darkness, all the despair of the human heart; it is the ray of light and warmth which streams down from the highest heavens upon our misery and weakness, and sheds upon it the inspiring conviction that God's Love and Care are far stronger and broader than our utmost fears and wants.

(γ) But there is a third element of the moral power of the Cross: it lights up the mystery of human pain. All worldly philosophies are for ever either ignoring or minimizing pain. But pain exists; it even increases as the world grows older; it enters into every life more or less,

¹ Rom. v. 7, 8.

² 2 Cor. v. 21.

³ *Ib.* 14, 15.

and some lives are simply lives of suffering. Now, the Cross breasts this momentous fact, not by ignoring or depreciating, but by transfiguring it. The Cross is a proposal, which may be accepted or not, to convert pain into nothing less than precious moral capital, to make it an instrument of the highest spiritual refinement. Apart from the Cross, such a view of human suffering as that which is presented to us in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, or in the second book of À Kempis' "Imitation of Christ," would be simple mockery of our woes; but when we consider Him Who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and Who endured the Cross and despised the shame, we understand that to suffer is to gain, to triumph, if only we will have it so. Jesus Christ crucified has put such high honour upon human pain, He has infused into it such heavenly virtue, that it is no longer for Christians a foe, it is a friend; its empire over life is no longer darkness, but light; it is no longer a presentiment of darkness beyond the grave, but a throne, somewhere beneath the Throne of the Great Sufferer, in the final Kingdom of Eternal Love.

For these three reasons, then, if for no other, the preaching of the Cross is power to those who are being saved. It is a revelation of Sanctity, a revelation of Love, a transfiguration of Pain. It addresses itself directly to all the best instincts and the worst apprehensions of the human heart. We feel its power just so far, as we can form any moderately true ideas of sin and holiness, of love and despair, of the sufferings which are around us and before us. Human life being what it is, the Cross is a power, greater, we may dare to say, than that of the Sermon on the Mount, greater than that of the Ascension into Heaven. When the Apostles put it in the forefront of their teaching, they knew what they

were doing, because they knew what human life really is; and if men deemed their proceeding folly, it was, it is, only because they do not see deep enough to understand the secrets of its wisdom.

III.

Foolishness and Power! It is the antithesis between the apparent and the true, between the public judgment of men and the Divine unseen reality. There are subjects touching which the saying of the Greek sage holds good—

“What seems to all to be,
That is, say we.”

Such, for instance, is the case with large districts of controverted questions in the region of social and political truth; but it is *not* the case in the matter of religion. A hospital full of patients might vote upon the agreeableness of the medicines offered them; but they would not be good judges of their efficacy or failure. The Cross appeals to primary truths which are not obvious at once to the popular eye, and which do not strike it; and it prescribes duties which are not welcome to the natural instincts of man.

The word of the Cross is pronounced day after day by large portions of the public press, to be utterly insignificant when it is placed in contrast with the great material and political interests which fill the thoughts and mouths of men in this great city. And yet public opinion is like the clouds, a floating mass of vapour which may darken the heavens to-day, and on the morrow have vanished. That which lives beyond the verdict of the hour, beyond the judgment of men, beyond the grave, is a power which derives its strength and persistence from the Cross.

Foolishness and Power! It is an antithesis which belongs to the whole religion of which the Cross is the centre. ‘The Christian Scriptures,’ in the eye of the mere

littérateur, 'are a collection of discarded legends, of questionable histories, of moral and theosophic theories which have had their day: they are foolishness. The Christian creed is an old-world formula; it may have had a meaning for the fervid ignorance of the fourth and fifth centuries, which it has lost for us: it is foolishness. The Christian Sacraments belong to the realm of sentiment; they are ceremonies which once no doubt were real to those who took part in them, but they say nothing to the heart of a practical and utilitarian age: they are foolishness. The Church of Christ was a great power in the Middle Ages no doubt, and, like the ruins of the mediæval castles and abbeys, its titles and forms still linger in part upon the soil of England; but it is in reality only so much property, so many corporations, so many seats in the legislature, so many incumbencies; and when you have put an end to them, as, if you like, you can put an end to them by Act of Parliament, the Church will forthwith melt away into the thin air, and the illusion of its spell will have vanished for ever: it too is foolishness.'

So speak, now as of old, they that perish; but, in spite of their stout words, let us rest firmly assured that what they deem folly is power. The Bible is power: the power of an Infallible Spirit teaching the souls of men from pages which have been preternaturally preserved from the taint of error, and with a living force which bridges the centuries that have passed since its latest books were written, a force which is to us what it was to its earliest readers. The Creed is power: as we repeat it to-day, we touch with lips and heart truths of imperishable import; with the heart we believe them unto righteousness, and with the mouth we make confession of them unto salvation. The Sacraments are power: the power of the Living and Eternal Christ veiling His tenderest and most intimate dealings with the soul under the simplest of

outward transactions, and robing the lowliest and poorest members of His kingdom, before the eyes of His angels, with majesty and beauty, and force and light, by uniting them to Himself. The Church is power: so far as she claims her true rank as God's spiritual kingdom upon earth, so far as she wields with faith and love the heavenly weapons which God has given her, so far as she can rise to love men well enough to tell them, at all costs, the truth.

Foolishness and Power! They are stamped upon every Christlike life; it is folly in the judgment of large numbers of men, it is a waste of resources, it is a mystic reverie, it is an acted dream, it is a surrender of the positive and the practical in favour of the unattainable and the imaginary. But it is also power—power over sense, power over matter, power over the wills of men who have no fixed hold on truth, power, above all, with God and His Blessed Son. Without there is weakness in all its varieties; within there is strength in its majesty and beauty. There is a legend, which anyhow conveys a profound moral truth, that in the days of His flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ seemed to the Jews who argued with Him in the temple, to have the features of an idiot, at the very moments when to His Apostles, His Face, like His words, was flashing with heavenly light. Even so, to different men, does every true Christian life present these two aspects; often it is outwardly failure, inconsistency, but it is inwardly strength. These can only see how it is crucified through weakness, those know how it liveth through the power of God. May God, of His mercy, teach us all practically to welcome, if it may be, the foolishness and humiliation of the true religion of the Cross, that in coming days of trial we may know its power—its power to uphold and comfort us, its power to guide us safely to our Everlasting Home.

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SERMON III.

THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING.¹

1 COR. i. 21.

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

ST. JAMES the Great, whose festival the Church keeps to-day, differs from all the other Apostles in this—that his life falls altogether within that district of history which is covered by Holy Scripture. He was a son of the fisherman Zebedee, and together with his greater brother, the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, he obeyed our Lord's call on the sea of Galilee to become His disciple in the early part of the year 27. In the spring of the following year he was chosen to be one of the Twelve Apostles, and some months later he witnessed the miraculous raising of the daughter of Jairus. Another year passed, and whether on one of the spurs of Hermon, or, more probably, on a slight elevation at the summit of Tabor, St. James witnessed the Transfiguration of our Lord. That as yet their great privileges of intimate companionship with the Divine Redeemer had not moulded the characters of the sons of Zebedee into full accordance with their Lord's will is plain from two circumstances.

When our Lord was setting out on His last journey to Jerusalem, and had to pass through Samaria on His road, certain Samaritans, with their old jealousy of the Divinely-ordered worship at Jerusalem, refused to receive Him ;

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, St. James's Day, July 25, 1886.

His crime in their eyes was that He was going to worship at Jerusalem, and not on Mount Gerizim. James and John begged our Lord, like Elijah, to call down fire from heaven to consume these inhospitable villagers, and were rebuked for not knowing what spirit they were of.

Again, at the end of this journey, our Lord had encouraged His Apostles to encounter the troubles which were immediately before them by the promise that they would hereafter sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This promise raised the question, Who would sit on the thrones nearest to that of the King? and it may be that the sons of Zebedee at this time felt some jealousy of the sons of Jonas. In any case, it was probably this promise which led James and John to ask, through their mother Salome, that they might sit on the right hand and on the left of the King. They were told that they should indeed share their Master's sufferings; but no encouragement was given them to look for any especial pre-eminence in the future glory.

It is probable that, as in the earlier lists of the Apostles St. James's name is always mentioned before that of St. John, he was at this period the more prominent and energetic of the brothers, and had more than St. John to do with the prayers for fire from heaven and for the higher seats in the kingdom.

With his brother and St. Peter, he was near our Lord during the Agony in the Garden; and then, if we except the mention of his name among those who met for prayer in the Upper Chamber at Jerusalem after the Ascension, he disappears from history until his martyrdom.

In the year of our Lord 44 he was present in Jerusalem for the Passover. His impetuous character marked him out as a leading Christian, whose removal would be agreeable to the enemies of Christianity; and accordingly Herod Agrippa arrested him, ~~together with St. Peter,~~ and,

to the great satisfaction of the Jews as well as his own, slew him with the sword.

The narrative reported by Clement of Alexandria, that St. James converted his persecutor by his calm, undaunted bearing in the hour of death, and that they were both led to execution together, although not mentioned by St. Luke, cannot reasonably be rejected as apocryphal. Clement lived near enough to Palestine to get trustworthy information on such subjects; he lived within the second century of our era, and as no motive for the invention of the story can be assigned with any degree of probability, its historical accuracy may be taken for granted.

Between the call of St. James and his martyrdom seventeen years elapse. During fourteen years out of these seventeen we know nothing certainly about him. What was he doing between the Day of Pentecost and Easter, A.D. 44? We cannot doubt that he was, like others who were dispersed by the persecution that arose about Stephen, going everywhere preaching the Word. Some later traditions say that St. James even made his way to Spain as a herald of Jesus Christ. It may be so. There were easy means of communication in those days along the whole length of the Mediterranean. But there is no such evidence as to warrant anything like certainty on this head; all that can be certainly presumed is that the fourteen years after Pentecost were spent in the work of propagating the Faith.

Here it may be well to notice a circumstance in the history of the sons of Zebedee which is not without its bearing on the work of St. James. Our Lord gave the two brothers—apparently when He made them His Apostles—the name Beni Reges, which, in the popular Aramaic dialect, became Boanerges, the children of tumult or of thunder. The epithet probably referred to the natural impetuosity of disposition, which was especially prominent

in St. James, and which displayed itself on occasions already referred to; but it may also have had a kind of prophetic significance. Nature does not part with its salient characteristics when it is disciplined and transfigured by grace; and the fearless preacher of the Faith, who died by the sword of Herod, was still the man who before the Day of Pentecost had called down fire on the Samaritan village, and had asked for the highest places in the realm of glory. He was the same—yet different.

The energy remained, but the refining power of the Holy Spirit had melted out of it the alloy of impatience or ambition which had before disfigured it. Let us, on this his festival, think of his work as a preacher of the Faith, and in order to do so, let us place ourselves under St. Paul's guidance in the text.

St. Paul is, no doubt, immediately interested in Corinth—a scene of work very different from any in which we can suppose that St. James ever laboured. But in the early Christian time all Apostolic workmen had, to a great extent, common experiences; and St. Paul is thinking of all who had been thus working for Christ, when he says that it had pleased God, by means of that preaching which the Corinthians thought so foolish, to save them that believed.

I.

What was the preaching referred to? The word might be fairly rendered, "the truth preached." For St. Paul is not thinking of the action and process of announcement, but of the message announced. In his eyes mere discourse or oratory, irrespective of the claims of the subject on which it was employed, would have had no charm or dignity. His own speech and preaching, he says, was not with enticing words of man's wisdom; it owed nothing to

method, to the employment of rhetorical topics, to the studied choice and embellishment of language. The idea that public talking, upon any subject whatever, whether in the interests of human improvement or not, of Divine truth or not, has in itself a value, a virtue, an operative power for good, as though it were a sort of sacrament—this idea, however welcome in certain quarters of the modern world which will perhaps occur to us, did not find favour in the serious age of the Apostles, or in the eyes of that society which was founded by the first disciples of Christ. They were too much bent upon the possession of Truth to care for any language, however beautiful, which did not minister to and convey it; they were too deeply concerned with the actual truth announced to spend overmuch care and time over the machinery or the drapery of the process of announcement. The message itself, the truth preached, was their great and, indeed, exclusive concern; and it is to this that St. Paul refers as the instrument by which God was pleased to save them that believed. The world was saved by the substance of a message from heaven, not by the human words that conveyed it.

One leading characteristic of the Apostolical preaching, which gave it its saving power, was its positive and definite character. It is said of our Lord, by the Evangelist, that He “taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”¹ The scribes argued, hesitated, suggested, balanced, corrected themselves, explained themselves, retracted, modified, what they had said, as knowing themselves to be, at the very best, only feeling their way amid uncertainties. Our Lord spoke with His Eye on the Unchangeable, and this note of conscious authority passed on to the first preachers of the gospel. “As God is true,” writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, “our preaching towards you was not yea and nay. For the Son of

¹ St. Matt. vii. 29.

God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay; but in Him was yea.”¹ The Gospel was not a balance of probabilities, it was not a speculation about God, but a well-attested message from God to the soul of man. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”² That Which was from the beginning, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon, Which our hands have handled, of the Word of life,—That Which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.³ The proof that this new and effective communication between earth and heaven, between God and man, was not an imagination but hard fact, rested on the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, an event in which the realm of spirit laid the material world under obligation to subserve its purpose, by proving even to the senses the truth of our Lord’s claims and mission. Therefore St. Peter, at the day of Pentecost and afterwards, St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, at Athens and elsewhere, preached, before all things, the Resurrection. All else depended on it; it was the warrant, without which, as the Apostle said, “Our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain.”⁴

But resting thus on solid evidence—planting its foot thus firmly on the soil of earth and in the full daylight of human history—the Christian creed raised its head to heaven; unveiled to the believer the inner Being of God; displayed the manner in which, when God the Son took our nature upon Him, a bridge was constructed between earth and heaven; and then discovered to us the inmost Heart of the All-merciful, in the true meaning and value of the Sacrifice which was offered on Calvary for the sins

¹ 2 Cor. i. 18, 19.² 2 Cor. v. 20.³ 1 St. John i. 1, 3.⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 14.

of the whole world. From that Fountain, opened for sin and for uncleanness, flow all the hopes of pardon, all the reinforcements of Grace and Sacraments, by which the work of the Redeemer is carried forward in the sphere of sense and time—in preparation for the momentous and unending future. This was what the Apostles preached to the world; this was the preaching by which God was pleased to save those that believed. How was it regarded by cultivated people at the time, who were, as yet, outside the Christian creed and Church?

St. Paul answers that question by repeating the phrase, "the foolishness of the preaching." It is not—as I need hardly say—his own phrase. He did not himself think the preaching foolishness; but he adopts for the moment the current phrase of the day, the phrase current in certain quarters at Corinth. Many highly-cultivated Corinthians did think the Christian preaching foolishness. It was unlike all that they understood by wisdom, or, as they put it, philosophy. Philosophy, as understood in the old Greek world, was an attempt to furnish a tentative theory or account of the universe, of man, of human thought, of the relations between thought and the external world, more or less complete as the case might be, but based, at the best, upon the average resources of the human mind. Philosophy, from the nature of the case, did not attain to permanence or certainty. It was always shifting, always reflecting in its changes the successive activities and moods of thought which created it, and so contrasting vitally with a preaching that centred in Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It was at best a reaching after, rather than a possession of truth; and to claim to possess truth absolutely seemed to it a baseless and foolish pretension. Yet this claim the Gospel did undoubtedly make; and it also claimed that the truth of which it was so certain belongs in the main not to the region of nature and

experience, but to a higher world that can be only explored by faith. Besides this, the Gospel placed before mankind a new ideal of life, in which the passive virtues, longsuffering, gentleness, forgiveness of injuries, and the like, were to count for much more than they had ever counted yet; and all this, in Greek eyes, was folly, only to be accounted for by an hallucination, which Eastern ways and lack of Greek culture might forcibly explain. This was the Greek estimate of the Apostolic message from God; the Jews had formed another not less unfavourable; and each form of error with which the Gospel came into collision, soon formed and formulated its own criticism. But the Apostolic work went on. "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Philosophy of God."¹

II.

Of this preaching, what was the purpose or object? St. Paul replies, "To save them that believe."

We must beware of degrading this great word "save" by reading into it anything else or less than it meant for St. Paul. When he speaks of salvation, he has in the background of his thought the unending ruin from which salvation is a rescue. He is not thinking of anything that is limited by time, or by this earthly scene; he is not thinking of physical, or social, or national disaster. Incidentally, no doubt, the Gospel does save mankind from these forms of ruin; it promotes, within limits, and as a very secondary object of its activity, the temporal well-being of man, in his individual and social capacity,—the well-being of his body and of his mind. And provided that it is understood that we are using the word in an adapted sense, there is

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

no harm in speaking occasionally of salvation from mental ignorance, or salvation from social peril, or salvation from any form of mischief limited to this transitory life. But when the Apostle speaks of salvation, without explaining its sphere of operation, he means, beyond all question, a salvation of the individual soul from ruin, begun here, and rendered beyond the grave permanent and irretrievable—salvation from Eternal Death. From this ruin He alone could save men, Who died for them on the Cross, and Who has the keys of hell and of death. And the preaching of the Apostles presented Him to the souls of men, in St. Paul's phrase, as "evidently set forth crucified among them," as their Saviour, their only and all-sufficient Saviour, Who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

III.

Once more, Who are capable of receiving this salvation? The Apostle answers, They that believe.

As a matter of fact, then, the recipients of salvation are a limited class. Originally, salvation is destined for all mankind by the Universal Father. "Jesus Christ," says the Apostle, "died for all." But man has the great and perilous gift of freewill, and God does not put force on him, and compel him to accept blessings which, in his folly, he casts aside. It is because men can at pleasure accept or reject salvation, that salvation only reaches "them that believe." Belief is, in its essence, the act by which the soul accepts salvation.

This is what we learn from the accounts of conversions under the influence of Apostolic preaching in the New Testament. For instance, to the jailor's question at Philippi, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" St. Paul and Silas answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and

thou shalt be saved.”¹ What is this belief? It is not merely the acceptance of Truth by the understanding; because the understanding may be active, while the heart and will are untouched. It is not merely an act of moral confidence, because such confidence may be based on mistaken grounds, or on some radical misapprehension of the object presented to faith. It is a movement of the whole soul, of all its powers, going forth to meet the approaching Truth; it is thought, affection, trust, self-surrender, face to Face with the unseen yet clearly apprehended Christ. Thus, when St. Paul tells us that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, he adds, “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”² The heart, here as so generally in both Testaments, means not only the seat or faculty of loving, but the centre of the soul’s life of thought and affection and resolve. And yet salvation is not named until the act of adhesion to Jesus Christ has taken a practical, outward, even audible form; “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” In like manner, St. Paul tells the Galatians that neither the Jewish ordinance of circumcision, nor its absence, affected salvation in any degree, “but faith that worketh by love.”³ A faith that should not work by love, would not, in St. Paul’s eyes, deserve the name of faith; certainly it would not ‘justify.’ Faith in Christ and love for Christ are separable in idea; they are, in fact and practice, inseparable in a living Christian soul. The anatomist distinguishes clearly enough between the nervous and the arterial systems in the human body; and physiology may say that the one is more directly concerned with the maintenance of life from moment to moment than the other. But practically, so far as we know, life cannot subsist without both arteries and nerves; and those who insist most earnestly on saying with St. Paul, “We are justified

¹ Acts xvi. 31.² Rom. x. 10.³ Gal. v. 6.

by faith," dare not be so false to St. Paul's teaching as to add, "We are justified, even if we have no love of God at all in our hearts."

Faith, then, is an act of the whole soul, thinking, loving, resolving, trusting, going forth to meet the Truth which approaches it in the Apostolic message. But this faith, let us remark it well, does not of itself operate or effect justification or salvation. When we say that we are justified by faith, we mean that faith is a title—an indispensable title, but only a title—to our justification or salvation. If faith of itself justified or saved, we should be our own justifiers, our own saviours. This, every Christian knows, is impossible; our inability to save ourselves is the very truth which St. Paul lays down as fundamental, before he proceeds to show how God has saved us through Christ.

No, faith does not, cannot, of itself save; faith is only the hand which we hold out to receive a Salvation which is wrought for us, and which we must thus receive in order to make it our own. Faith, I repeat it, is our letter of introduction to Salvation; we must present it, before our true and only Saviour effects in us His saving work. This is plain, from the case of St. Paul himself. When he was converted on the road to Damascus, he obeyed by faith the vision from heaven; he went into Damascus already a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ; he waited for three days, and then Ananias said to him, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Then at his baptism the full gift of Salvation was bestowed upon him by his Saviour, but for the acceptance of this gift his faith was an indispensable title. Then he became not merely a disciple by conviction, but a member of Christ. The same truth is apparent on a careful study of the cases of Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch; faith was in either case a condition precedent of salvation, which was only secured when the convert was baptized.

Preaching, as a means of propagating the faith and of converting souls to Christ, is still what it was in the Apostolic age. But for Christians in a state of Grace, for believing and loving servants of Christ, listening to a sermon is not the first and greatest of Christian privileges. Those who maintain that it is, sometimes point to the fact that we read in the Acts of the Apostles more of preaching than of assemblies for worship or for reception of the Sacraments. This undoubted fact is easily accounted for. The Acts of the Apostles is for the most part the record of a series of missionary efforts. It is not the record of a settled Church. And while a mission to Jews or heathen is going forward, preaching, from the necessity of the case, must occupy a much more prominent place than other Christian ordinances. Preaching is the tool in the hand of the Christian missionary by which he forces his way into the dense opposing mass of heathen thought and feeling; but when he has triumphed, and a population or a neighbourhood has accepted Christianity, preaching becomes, I do not say unimportant, but of less importance relatively to other ordinances than was the case during the purely missionary stage of Church life. Until preaching has brought a soul to pray, and to desire and use the means of Grace, it is more important to that soul than anything else; but when this great work is done, Prayer and Sacraments become, spiritually speaking, of more importance than preaching. It surely cannot be otherwise. If we know by experience what it is to hold communion with the Infinite and Eternal Being, we cannot doubt that in doing this we are engaged in a much loftier and more momentous duty than when we are only listening to a fellow-creature, a fellow-sinner, telling us what he knows about God, with whatever skill or faithfulness. Not that preaching is, or ever will be, without value for the servants of Christ. It recalls to memory forgotten truths; it

places new aspects of recognized truth before the soul, presents old truths in new aspects. It shows how the Faith which does not change has the same power of helping from age to age an ever-changing world. It kindles affection, it fertilizes thought, it quickens conscience, it rebukes presumption; it invigorates weakness, it consoles sorrow; it deepens the sense of man's helplessness and of God's Omnipotence—the two most fundamental convictions for a true religious life. It keeps that world which we do not see, but which is so close to us, and towards which we are hastening moment by moment, before the soul's eye; it is a reminder of Eternity constantly uttered amid the clamorous importunity, the engrossing interest, of the concerns of time. Do I say that it *is* all this, or that it *ought* to be? For the question is often asked why preaching is, in so many cases, apparently powerless for real good, especially in quarters and in classes which are supposed to be more open than others to the influences of religion. We cannot challenge the substantial truth implied in the question; the evidence, alas! is before our eyes, indisputable, overwhelming.

Well, brethren, one answer to that question is undoubtedly to be found in the weaknesses, the inconsistencies, the faults of character, the want of true spiritual insight, and of lofty and disinterested aims, in us who are entrusted with this high and awful ministry.

Beyond doubt, we bear our treasure in earthen vessels, and it well may be that ere it reaches those to whom we bear it, it is discoloured, or distorted, or mutilated, or at least robbed of its lustre and its power, by the hands that should guard it. It is not in forgetfulness of the responsibility for any such failure that may well, in the eyes of the Eternal Justice, be reckoned to us the clergy, that I ask you to consider whether you too may not be, at least in part, responsible. May it not be now, as of old, that the

word preached does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it? When the pulpit is looked to only or chiefly as furnishing interest or amusement not to be distinguished from that which is furnished by a magazine or newspaper; when, as the hearer leaves the church, instead of asking himself the question, "What did that sermon say to me?" he only asks a neighbour, "Well, what do you think of Mr. So-and-so's performance?" preaching is not likely to do much real good. Now, as in Ezekiel's days, a sermon is too often regarded as "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." Now, as to Ezekiel, it is whispered from above, "They hear thy words, but they do them not." The modern Athenians, who spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing, and who are more than tolerant of irreverence or error if they only can be gratified with novelty, would certainly, like their predecessors, have thought cheaply of St. Paul. Every sermon, let us be sure, whatever its faults, contains some truths that it is well to be reminded of, and rebukes some sins which it is not prudent to forget. Now, as of old, it pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. The best sermons, as we deem them, are useless unless God the Holy Ghost condescends to make use of them; and the worst and poorest may be ennobled when He impresses them on a human soul. May He lead you, my brethren, to make the most of anything which, amid whatever else there be of weakness or error, can enlighten your understandings, or rouse your consciences, or warm your hearts! And may we all, preachers and hearers, think constantly and seriously of that Great Day, when account must be taken of all that has been said and of all that has been left unsaid; of all that has been heard and acted on, and of all that has been heard and neglected or disobeyed. Brethren, Time is short; Eternity is long.

SERMON IV.

THE TRIAL OF WORK.¹

I COR. iii. 13.

The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

PROBABLY nothing in their ministerial career was more unwelcome to the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and to their fellow-worker Apollos, than the use which was made of their names by officious friends at Corinth. The Apostles were represented by these busy people as heads of parties in the Corinthian Church; their names were freely bandied about as the labels of rival doctrines; each eager disputant undertook to explain the real mind of his chosen master, and to accentuate and intensify incipient differences by the explanation; even the holiest Name of all was dragged into the conflict as though Jesus Christ represented, not the one, all-including, unchanging Truth, but a particular variety of Christianity. "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." It was true, no doubt, that the first preachers of the Faith laid stress in their public teaching upon different aspects or elements of the one Faith which they preached. Cephas, or St. Peter, would naturally represent the Gospel as the outcome or fulfilment of the Jewish law; St. Paul, as the enjoyment of the relation of a sonship with God offered to all through union

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Third Sunday in Advent, December 15, 1889.

with His Only-Begotten Son, and its consequent claims to be a world-wide, or Catholic, and not a merely national religion ; while Apollos would call attention to the common elements between it and the thought and culture of the Greek or Alexandrian world to which he had devoted much of his earlier life. These several phases or forms of religious teaching are by no means incompatible with each other ; a value for the past may easily go hand in hand with joy in spiritual freedom, and with appreciation of the resources of modern learning and research ; and St. Paul was no more opposed to St. Peter on one ground than to Apollos on the other. But the Corinthians did not see far enough to understand this. For centuries the Greeks had connected each tenet in, almost each method of teaching philosophy with some prominent name ; and when converted to Christianity, they carried this habit into the Church of Christ, in which there is only one Master of Truth, while all others are His disciples, though engaged in setting forth, it may be, now one now another element or aspect of His teaching. And thus it happened that, in spite of the feeling of those most concerned, their pupils formed around their names separated and hostile groups ; attributed to them the advocacy of distinct and incompatible Gospels ; and so the Church of Corinth had come to present the appearance of a collection of hostile sects within a single diocesan enclosure, attended by all the unwelcome symptoms of rivalry, ill-feeling, and incessant gossip which such a state of things implies.

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul takes little or no notice of the presumed rivalry between himself and St. Peter ; he addresses himself to the adherents of Apollos. He compares his work with that of Apollos by means of two metaphors.

The first is taken from husbandry. He and Apollos

are two labourers in the garden of the Lord at Corinth. He had planted the seeds of truth, Apollos had watered them. He had taught the Corinthians simply to believe in Jesus Christ, Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, Interceding; and then Apollos had come on the scene to answer the questions which the Faith suggested to a quick-witted Greek people. His teaching certainly differed to a certain extent in the ground it covered, and still more in its method, from that of Apollos. But there was ample room for both of them; they were not merely in harmony with, they were supplemental to each other, and the real Agent was distinct from both of them. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. . . . Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one." This metaphor of husbandry did not, however, suggest the full truth. It taught that all true spiritual growth is the work of God's grace, and that husbandmen whose occupations were very different, were both working for a single end; but it left no room for the fact that, since God's instruments are men, they are apt to deposit along with the precious material which comes from God more or less material of another kind, which is their own, and which is not more precious or enduring than other things of purely human origin. This last truth had to be taught by another metaphor, which recognizes that the Christian faith and life in the soul is not only a growth, but also in some sense an erection at which human hands toil, and to which human materials contribute something. The spiritual building can have only one foundation, if it is to be Christian at all—it must be based on the Lord Jesus Christ; but on that one foundation edifices of more kinds than one may possibly be erected in different souls. "Ye," he writes to his Corinthian friends, "are not only God's tilled land, but God's building. According to the grace

of God, which was given to me as a true master builder, I laid a foundation, and another buildeth thereon." Then, in an altered tone of significant warning, he adds, "Let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. . . . If any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest, for the Day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Many of us who live in London have at some time watched that awful but fascinating sight, the progress of a great fire, have marked how the devouring element masters first one and then another department of the building which is its victim; but especially we have noted what it consumes and what it is forced to spare, the resistless force with which it sweeps through and shrivels up all slighter materials, and only pauses before the solid barriers of stone or iron, thus trying, before our eyes, the builder's work of what sort it is.

I.

Of whom was the Apostle thinking when he wrote the warning words about the spiritual builder who employed wood, hay, and stubble in his work? Not, we may be pretty sure, of Apollos himself. When St. Paul wrote these words, Apollos was at his side at Ephesus, so far as we know, on terms of perfect confidence and friendship. Only once in later days does the Apostle refer to him; and the terms in which he does so in his letter to Titus¹ forbid the idea that there can have been any such failure in his work as a Christian teacher, as these words would imply. But it is very possible that the eager adherents of Apollos had deserved the censure conveyed by the Apostle. They had been powerfully impressed by the brilliant Alexandrian, by his knowledge of what was

¹ Tit. iii. 13.

thought in the Greek world, and by his skill in setting out what he had to say to the best advantage. They were, after the manner of disciples, more eager to imitate their master's manner and methods, than careful to be true to the end he had in view; and so it would seem likely that St. Paul had them, or some of them, in his eye throughout those striking paragraphs of this Epistle, in which he treats of the Gospel as the true philosophy or Wisdom of God—the Wisdom which set forth Christ crucified as the remedy for the sins and sorrows and errors of men, in contrast to the wisdom of this world, which had no end beyond its poor and thin and vapid self, save the credit of its originators and promoters. That some of these younger Apollonists—so to call them—should, in their teaching, have mixed up wood, hay, and stubble with more precious things was probable enough. No doubt they, too, taught the heathen, who sought from them light and guidance, the supreme and eternal Truths, the Unity and the Attributes of God; the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of the Eternal Son; the unapproached perfections of His Human Life; the atoning value of His Passion; the new life which, by the agency of His Spirit, He communicates through appointed channels to the souls of men. No doubt they, too, insisted on the awful issues of existence; on the solemn meaning of probation, on that which lies beyond the grave, for man's weal or his woe. But, mingled with these truths, were other matters, not subsidiary to them, not illustrating their meaning, but inserted like fragments of a foreign body, to which in reality they belonged, scraps of heathen thought, tag-ends of pagan conceits or epigrams, speculations which might lead anywhither else, but which did not lead to Bethlehem and Calvary; Platonist views of the old literature or religion of the Greeks, applied, within certain limits, to the sacred books of the Hebrews; questions such as, "How are the dead raised up?" asked to provoke

discussion, while an answer to them was impossible; and the whole motley jumble producing in the mind of the Christian disciple, it may be, at the moment, a sense of excitement or amusement; but in the result permanent bewilderment and uncertainty, which would be ill able to cope with the trials that surely awaited him.

“The fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” That was the note of solemn warning which the Apostle sounded. “Take care,” he seems to say to the young men who were trading on the great name and authority of Apollos—“take care what you are doing with those souls at Corinth. Are you only interesting and amusing them for a few of the passing days of time, or are you building them up in a faith which will enable them to face Eternity? What are the materials of the structure within those souls which you are rearing? Are there the gold, silver, and precious stones of true Apostolic doctrine? No doubt they are; but are there not also materials of a different kind—less valuable, less durable—wood, hay, and stubble? Of this be sure, a time is coming when all, the precious and the worthless, will be submitted to a serious test. ‘The fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.’”

II.

What was this fire? The Apostle has told us that he was thinking chiefly of the coming Day of Christ’s appearing. “The Day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed in fire.” Or, as he writes to the Thessalonians, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.” The Apostle, then, is not here thinking of any fire which will outlast the judgment, such as the fire of hell, nor yet of any that will precede it; it is a fire which will environ the Judge, in which He will be manifested; and a fire which will search and probe every man’s work, testing its quality, playing

harmlessly round all that is solid and enduring, but withering up into a thin cinder all that is frivolous and unsubstantial.

This is no doubt the Apostle's meaning. But He Who at the end will judge us once for all, is now and always judging us ; and His perpetual presence as the Judge, Who is constantly probing and sifting us, is revealed by events and circumstances which have on our souls the effect of fire—they burn up what is frivolous and worthless, and they leave what is solid unscathed. There are many events and situations which act upon us as fire ; it will be enough to consider one or two of them.

There is the searching, testing power of a responsible and new position, of a situation forcing its occupant to make a critical choice, or to withstand a strong pressure. Such a new position discovers and burns up all that is weak in a man's faith or character. In quiet times there is nothing to extort the discovery ; but when a great effort of action or of resistance becomes necessary, it is soon seen what will and will not stand the test. All that looks like a hold on solid principle, and is in reality only fancy, or sentiment, or speculation, is then seen to be unserviceable ; and if a man's religious mind is mainly composed of such material, a catastrophe is inevitable. Sometimes, indeed, men surprise us, when placed in a difficult position, by the sudden exhibition of qualities for which no one before had given them credit ; the apparently thoughtless show foresight, and the timid courage, and the selfish disinterestedness, and the irresolute perseverance, of which there had hitherto been no evidence whatever.

The quiet schoolboy in an Italian village, whom his playmates name the "dumb ox," becomes, almost in spite of himself, the first of the scholars—one of the few greatest thinkers in the world.¹ The officer who has been

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas.

distinguished for nothing but a punctual regard to duty, is suddenly placed in a position to show that he has almost the genius and courage sufficient to roll back the course of history, and to save a falling empire from ruin. The youth whose life has been passed amidst scenes of frivolity, or perhaps of licentiousness, hears one day an appeal to his conscience, his sense of duty, his sense of failure, and wakes from a dream of sensual lethargy, to show the world that he has in him the making of a man, aye, the making of a saint. These, as you know, are not imaginary pictures. But the Greeks had a stern proverb to the effect that a position of leadership shows what a man is. The real drift of the saying was that in practice it too often shows what he is not. It implies that too generally the discovery would be unfavourable; that the test of high office would, in a majority of cases, bring to light something weak or rotten in the character, which in private life might have escaped detection. History is strewn with illustrations of this truth; the virtuous, though weak Emperor, who was floated to power on the surf of a revolution, is by no means the only man of whom it might be written that all men would have judged him capable of ruling others, had he only never been a ruler. How often does manhood open with so much that seems promising, intelligence, courage, attention to duty, good feeling, unselfishness, all that looks like high principle—and then a man is put into a position of authority. It is the fire which tests the work he has done in his character. Suddenly he betrays some one defect which ruins everything. It may be vanity; it may be envy; it may be untruthfulness; it may be some lower passion which emerges suddenly, and as if unbidden, from the depths of the soul, and gains over him a fatal mastery. All his good is turned to ill, all is distorted, discoloured; he might have died as a young man, amid general

lamentations that so promising a life had been cut short. He does die, as did Nero or Henry VIII., amidst the loudly expressed or muttered thanksgivings of his generation that he has left the world. The fact was, that the position in which he found himself exposed him to a pressure which his character could not bear.

You remember how the old Tay bridge, before that fatal winter night, was believed to be equal to its purpose; no one of us who had travelled by it high in the air, over what was practically an arm of the sea, thought that it could but do its work for many long years to come, in all winds and weathers. It needed, no doubt, a mighty impact, a terrific rush of wind from a particular quarter, to show that the genius and audacity of man had presumed too largely on the forbearance of the elements; but—the moment came. We, many of us, remember something of the sense of horror which that tragical catastrophe left on the public mind—the gradual disappearance of the last train, as it moved along its wonted way into the darkness, the suddenly observed dislocation and flickering of the distant lights, the faint sound as of a crash, rising for a moment above the din of the storm, and then the utter darkness, as all—train and bridge together—sank into the gulf of waters beneath, and one moment of supreme agony was followed by the silence of death.¹ So it has been more than once in the moral world; and the Apostle foresaw that some of the Christians at Corinth, who were mingling, in the spiritual building within them, along with the gold and silver and precious stones of the Apostolic faith, baser and less worthy material, might illustrate, as time went on, what it is to have one's work tried even in this world, not by a tempest, but by fire—a fire which should indeed discover of what sort it was.

Within the last few years an able writer has disinterred

¹ This occurred on the 28th of December, 1879.

from the uncertainties and legends which had before surrounded the subject, and has given to the world, well-nigh, we may venture to say, in its historical completeness, the history of the persecutions of the early Christian Church. In that history the failures of the persecuted Christians are far more tragical than their sufferings; their sufferings meant victory, their escape from suffering meant defeat. Not seldom did it happen that the Christian, who had not made sure of his real Creed, nor measured the trial which awaited him, quailed at the decisive moment, surrendered the Sacred Books, betrayed the hiding-place of his pastor or bishop, offered the pinch of incense on the idolatrous altar to the genius of the Emperor.

To all seeming, that Christian might have lived and died in quiet times, a faithful servant of Christ; but a position of prominence which he courted, in his easy self-confidence, betrayed a fatal weakness; and he heard in his conscience, as he bent in homage before the heathen tribunal, the awful words, "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven."

III.

We see these truths at work in associated as well as in individual human life. Every one will recall the names of Empires which have appeared to possess the elements of unconquerable strength, until they have suddenly been subjected to the test of new conditions. The Empires of the great Alexander, of Attila the Hun, of the first Napoleon, are in point. Alexander subdued all the nations which spread from the Adriatic to the Indus; but no sooner had he passed away, than the unity of his work was shattered by the ambitions of his favourite generals. Attila at one time ruled from the Volga to the Loire; the vast host at his disposal was commanded by a bevy of

subject-kings and chiefs; the Roman emperors of East and West alike were his obsequious tributaries; and the men of his day expressed the terror which his apparently boundless power inspired, when they named him the Scourge of God. Yet he had scarcely been discovered dead on his couch after a drunken revel, than his sons, greedy for high place, turned their arms against each other; and within fifteen years, the Huns had sunk to be the dependents and tributaries of the very races which they but now had ruled. And there is Attila's great counterpart in modern Europe—Napoleon. His vast motley hosts swept along over much of the same ground as Attila, but in an opposite direction. Like Attila's, they passed over ancient and prostrate thrones; like his, too, on the errand of an insatiable ambition; but, before he died, his work had been tested with a severity which revealed its weakness, and left behind it nothing but a million of tombs, and the dying echoes of a vast catastrophe.

As with States, so with Churches—with particular branches of the Christian Church, though not with the Church Universal, which has a promise of indefectibility: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." A Church may be, to all appearance, highly favoured; it may have leaders conspicuous for holiness or learning, it may reckon its multitudes of devout communicants, its flourishing missions at home and abroad, its works of benevolence and mercy. Yet it may have admitted to its bosom some false principle, whether of faith or morals, which will find it out in the day of trial. There is one very solemn instance of this in Christian antiquity. In the early centuries no Church was more highly favoured than that of Northern Africa. Among its teachers were names as great as, one greater than, any other in post-Apostolic Christendom, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine. It had, says a good authority, almost innumerable Churches;

it produced saints and martyrs ; its intellectual and practical activity was attested by the long series of the Councils of Carthage. It was the first Church, so far as we know—certainly earlier than any in Italy—to translate the New Testament Scriptures into the language of the West ; it held its own in debate with the greatest Churches of Europe, with Rome itself. The day of trial came on it with the invasion of the Arian Vandals, who surged round the walls of Hippo, as Augustine lay dying within ; it came again, and more decisively, with the Moslem conquest. There are Churches in the East which have suffered as much, or more, than the Church of Africa—Churches which have never ceased to suffer—yet which to-day, in their weakness, are instinct with life and hope ; but the Church of Cyprian and Augustine perished outright. We can guess at the cause, we cannot determine it. It may have been a lax morality among its people ; it may have been a spirit of paradox among some of its teachers. It may have been some far-reaching weakness or corruption which the Day of Account will alone reveal. But there is the fact. No Church stood higher in primitive Christendom than the Church of Africa ; none has ever so utterly disappeared. Let us of the Church of to-day—of the Church of England—be not high-minded, but fear.

IV.

But if prominence and success do not discover what is weak in our faith and character, there is an agent who comes to all sooner or later, and who will surely do so. There is the fire, the searching, testing power of deep affliction. Many a creed which will do for the sunny days of life, will not serve us in its deep shadows, still less in the valley of the shadow of death. In those great troubles, which shake the soul to its depths, and force it to ask

itself what is really solid enough not to fail it, all withers away that does not rest, immediately or by necessary inference, on Divine authority. The truths which strengthen and brace character, and enable it to pass unscathed, like the three holy children, through the fiery furnace of deep sorrow, are the great certainties which were ever to the front in the Apostles' teaching about God and man, and life and death, and sin and redemption, and nature and grace—above all, about the boundless power and love of Jesus Christ our Lord. These solid realities will stand us in good stead whatever the sorrows of life may be, and in that Great Day of which Advent reminds us, when we shall be seen as we are; when no secret defects will escape exposure; when no indulgence will be extended to moral rottenness, only because it is found where all around is sound and fair. "I will search Jerusalem with candles,"¹ is a saying which will be fulfilled at that day as never before. "Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord! have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy Name cast out devils, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works; and then will I say unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."²

This day week some hundreds of young men will be ordained, not in this Church and country only, but all over Christendom, as ministers of Christ; and during the preceding days, and especially on the three Ember Days, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, we are all invited to remember them in our prayers, and to win, if we may, for them some of the strength and the gifts which they so greatly need. It is an exceptionally anxious time for those who are about to give their lives to this most blessed yet most serious of all employments; anxious, not so much on account of the political or social forecast, as in view of

¹ Zeph. i. 12.

² St. Matt. vii. 22, 23.

the state of mind of large numbers of men and women in this and other countries on the most important of all subjects. It is idle to disguise from ourselves that many are altogether estranged from the Christian Faith, not a few of whom might seem, by natural tendency and disposition, fitted to be its attached children; while many more, who have not rejected it, live in a state of continuous unsettlement and uncertainty. And meanwhile, as is natural in such circumstances, the moral evils which the Church of Christ was especially designed to encounter and to vanquish, crowd around us in new and more formidable and threatening forms. But this darker side of the picture is compensated for by the fact that, at least in this country, rarely has interest in religion been so widespread and so general as now; rarely, if ever, has it been so easy to obtain a hearing for religious truth. It might seem as though, amid all the bewilderment and uncertainty of minds around us, there was a quickened sense of the immense significance of life, in itself and in what are felt to be, at any rate, its possible issues. If the great Apostle were here, he would surely exclaim as of old, when writing from Ephesus to his children at Corinth: "A great door and effectual is opened unto me." Let us pray that the young recruits for the ministerial army of the Great Captain of our salvation may know how to meet their difficulties and how to use their opportunities; that they may build up each, first in his own soul, and then in the souls of this and the coming generation, the gold and precious stones of the one unchanging Faith without the wood and hay and stubble that might fatally imperil the building; and that at the last great day they and their flocks may be owned by Him Whose mighty Love is indeed the revelation of the Essential Life of God, but Whose Eyes withal are as a flame of fire, and out of Whose Mouth there goeth a sharp two-edged sword.

SERMON V.

SELF-JUDGMENT.¹

I COR. XI. 31.

If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

ST. PAUL'S immediate object here is to save his flock at Corinth—or some part of it—from the penal consequences of receiving the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood unworthily. In those early days the Holy Communion was sometimes administered, at any rate at Corinth, on the occasion of an Agape, or Love-feast—a kind of club dinner, having for its object the promotion of kindly feelings and intercourse between different classes in the Church, but having nothing to do with the celebration of the Holy Sacrament itself. The provisions for the Love-feast would have been supplied by the wealthier members of the Church; it was a recognition on their part of the Christian doctrine of property as a trusteeship for God and the poor; and because it had this religious as well as social and philanthropic character, it was, as we must suppose, preceded by a celebration of the Holy Sacrament. Now, St. Paul had heard of certain proceedings at the Love-feast which, in his judgment, involved those who took part in them, and who had also taken part in the Sacramental service that

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the First Sunday in Advent, December 1, 1889.

preceded them, in the guilt of profaning the Holy Sacrament which they had received immediately before. It appeared that, owing to causes which it is difficult to determine positively, there was a great want of proper order and management at the Love-feast, so that it had become, on certain occasions, little better than a general struggle for provisions. Some of the contributors to the common stock were anxious themselves to consume what they had themselves sent in, others to enjoy a good meal whoever might have provided it; and so one Christian might be seen at this professed Feast of Charity making that most degrading of all exhibitions of himself which a human being can make—by getting drunk; while another, his poorer brother, could not succeed, in the scramble and confusion, in getting anything at all. “One is hungry,” exclaims the Apostle, “and another is drunken.” If the Christians at Corinth could not do better than this, so thought the Apostle, let them take their meals at home; let them not turn a feast which was designed to sustain, express, and expand the Christian love of man for man, into a public display of selfish animalism. Above all, let them fear to associate this conduct with the reception of the Holy Communion. They could not have thought steadily what their Communion, just before these excesses, had really meant. They could not have considered how, unless truly repented of, such excesses made another Communion out of the question. They had to remember, with regard to the Holy Sacrament, that “he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment, or condemnation, to himself; not discerning the Lord’s Body.” They might, the Apostle adds, see a token of God’s judgments on this particular sin, in the sickness and the deaths which had recently been so common in the Church at Corinth. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” Before they

presumed to approach the Holy Sacrament again, they should find out, by a serious effort, how they stood with God, and what their sins, especially in this matter, had been. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup." If they would undertake this duty seriously, they would escape the Divine judgments which, as they might see, were already impending over them. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

I.

The principle here laid down covers other cases than that of the Corinthians, and other judgments of God than those temporal and physical afflictions with which the Corinthians had been visited. It asserts broadly that God's judgments of us may be, at least in some degree, anticipated by ourselves, and that if in judging ourselves we are thorough and sincere, we may escape the punishment which would else await us. Some punishment must follow on wrong-doing, if the moral government of the world is to go on at all; but it had better be here than elsewhere—better now than hereafter—better accepted willingly by the soul which judges itself than submitted to with reluctance and dread when God arises to judgment.

If the question be asked how can a presumed criminal be his own judge, the answer lies in the constitution of the human soul. Every man has within him a faculty which discharges by turns all the functions of the officers of a court of justice. Need I name conscience? Conscience arrests the criminal soul, or self, and places it in the dock, where it will await its sentence. Conscience is the counsel for the prosecution; it collects the evidences of guilt, and sorts them out, and weighs

their value, and marshals them in their separate and collective strength, and urges the conclusion to which they point. But conscience is also the counsel for the defence, although on this side of the court it stands by no means alone ; it is assisted, often to its great embarrassment, by three uninvited and very importunate junior counsel, who are very nearly related to each other, —self-love, self-conceit, and self-assertion ; but yet, even on the side of the defence, conscience may sometimes have something honest and substantial to urge against the *primâ facie* aspects of the case for the prosecution. Then, having concluded the case for the prosecution and the case for the defendant, conscience weighs out and balances the conflicting statements, by a debate within itself after the fashion of a jury, as though it had many voices but a single mind. And once more, conscience, besides being thus warder and counsel on both sides, and jury, clothes itself at last in the higher majesty of justice, ascends the seat of judgment, and pronounces the sentence of the Divine Law ; and when that sentence is a sentence of condemnation, and has been clearly uttered within the soul, the soul knows no true peace until it has sought and found pardon from the Supreme Authority Which conscience represents.

Such is the process of self-judgment which the Apostle urges so earnestly on his friends at Corinth. He would have them bring, by the agency of conscience, their past acts and lives to the bar of conscience, listen to all that would be urged on this side and on that, and then receive sentence. If this were done, the misbehaviour at the Love-feast, and other things even more serious that were going on at Corinth, would soon disappear, and there would be no case for judgment at a higher tribunal. “ If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”

Self-judgment, in the sense recommended by the Apostle,

is not as easy a process as might at first sight appear. It has several obstacles or enemies to encounter who have long made themselves at home in human nature, and who are certain to do their best to interfere with it.

(a) Of these, the first is a want of entire sincerity. This involves a charge, the justice of which will be always disputed, but especially when it is made against the temper and disposition of men in our day. For, probably, if there is one thing on which we pride ourselves as characterizing us more than any generations who have preceded us, it is that we are devoted to truth. We have done with the illusions of the past—the illusions of ignorance, the illusions of class prejudice, the illusions of superstition, which obscured the mental sight of our forefathers; we are the sons of truth; we have only one ambition—to see things as they are. Is not our enthusiasm, as a generation, for truth plain to any man who will only take the trouble to read the papers or attend public meetings? What can be more admirable than our keenness of scent for a job, or for an impostor; for a public transaction which will not bear the light of day, or for a public character who has only to be exposed in order to be distrusted? Might it not seem that we had taken as our own the old Homeric motto, “Let us have light, though we perish in it;” so strong is this passion for truth, so noble, so far-reaching, so actively at work in all directions, whether of public or private life, around us?

Yes, my friends, this anxiety to dissipate illusions around us for which we have no personal responsibility, but which appear to inflict on us something like a personal distress, is sufficiently noticeable. But is our passion for truth equally ardent in all directions? Is there not one quarter, at least, in which we shrink from indulging it? Is it not often the case, that while we are eager to know everything, even the worst, about public

affairs and the affairs of our neighbours, about persons high in the State, and our humblest acquaintances, there is one set of affairs and one person about which the large majority of us is often content to be very ignorant indeed? The eyes which see so keenly what is wrong elsewhere, suddenly become dim when they turn their gaze within; the attention which is devoted so unremittingly to measuring and weighing the mote that is observable in another's eye, is suddenly exchanged for a listless apathy or for an advised indifference when it is a question of considering the size and weight of a beam nearer home. Our love of truth, it seems, if warm and intense, is not strictly universal in its field of operations; and the quarter in which its failure is most apparent is unfortunately that very quarter which concerns each of us most nearly, to know as fully and accurately as we can.

(β) A second enemy to a true self-judgment is moral cowardice. Observe, I say, moral cowardice—a very different thing from physical. Men who would shrink from nothing that involved exposure to personal danger, and was an affair of the nerves, dare not look conscience steadily in the face. Physical courage is a great gift; but it is an attribute of the lion and many other animals as much as of man. The man who would head a storming party without a minute's hesitation, is not always willing to meet his true self. As we look on the surface of our own characters, how fair they often seem; how like a flower-garden, which the gentle courtesies of our friends, and our own self-approbation, have laboured together to lay out to the best advantage. But what if we disturb the soil, and look a little beneath the surface?

Our Lord once referred to the tombs in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, the outer architectural forms of which, as they met the eye in the rocks above the valley of Hinnom and elsewhere, were so carved and painted as

altogether to satisfy the sense of beauty in the passers-by; while within, as He reminded His hearers, they were "full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." That is from age to age too often a figure of the human soul; and to roll away the carved and painted stone from the door of that sepulchre, and examine the contents of the chambers within, requires courage of a higher order than physical. If the truth is to be told, are not a great many of us like those country-folk who are afraid of crossing a churchyard path after nightfall, lest they should see a ghost behind a tombstone? Our consciences are but cemeteries, in which dead memories are buried—close to or upon each other in a forgotten confusion; it is so long since some of them were laid to rest, that the inscriptions on their gravestones have already decayed. To traverse that cemetery, and encounter those spectres, as at the trumpet-call of a quickened conscience they rise one by one to meet us, is an act that will be made light of by no man, and will be a positive terror to many. Certainly it requires moral courage.

Some of you may have noticed an account of the conduct of a distinguished and learned Englishman who nearly lost his life in Egypt in the spring of the present year. He was travelling in order to prosecute his favourite studies, and was returning to his boat on the Nile after examining some antiquities in the neighbourhood, when he trod upon a cerastes—a snake of the same species as that which, nineteen centuries ago, put an end to the life of the fallen Cleopatra. When he felt that he had been bitten, and one rapid glance had shown him the deadly nature of the reptile, he lost not a moment in making his way to the boat, which was happily only a few yards distant, called for a hot iron, which can generally be had at short notice on board, and then, with his own hands, he applied it to the wound, holding it

there until he had burnt out the poisoned flesh down to the bone. "Had you acted with less decision," said a distinguished physician to him on his return to Cairo—"had you acted with less decision, your life must have been forfeited."

In matters of conscience we are less capable of heroism—though a great deal more is at stake. We are, it may be, willing to put ourselves to some inconvenience, to expose ourselves to feeling some remorse; but we shrink from acute mental pain. We cannot probe the wounds of our souls to the quick; we must stop at a certain point, and bandage it all up, and hope for the best. It is all natural enough, no doubt; but it is not so wise as it is natural. We cannot really get rid of fatal mischief by half-measures. That which we shrink from extirpating will fester within our moral system, and in the end achieve its deadly victory. That judgment of self which we shrink from instituting for ourselves now, will surely be held and pronounced hereafter by a Wisdom and a Strength which we cannot resist. Only—if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged!

(γ) A third enemy to a true self-judgment is lack of perseverance. The Apostle is not recommending a self-judgment which may be pronounced on one occasion only, and once for all. As we are constantly being tempted, and often yielding more or less to temptation, we should be constantly bringing ourselves to the bar of conscience—to the bar of God. Self-judgment should be lifelong, unless we can presume, at the close of our lives, on an entire immunity from sin. It is, no doubt, often assumed by people that, as they get older, they will, as a matter of course, be getting better; but, in fact, this is by no means always the case: many men, as they grow older, grow also worse; and if this be so, the need for self-judgment—to say the least—does not diminish. But, unless we take

care, the determination to persevere in being true with ourselves is likely to become weaker and more intermittent as time goes on; much will take place within us which will never have been reviewed. There have been sovereigns of earthly realms, such as the Emperor Hadrian, and the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, whose sense of the responsibilities of empire has been such as to impel them to do more than official duty would prescribe; instead of trusting to official reports, to inspect their dominions, and visit their subjects so far as they could personally, perhaps in disguise; and so to relieve distress, and encourage meritorious effort, and correct injustice, and promote well-being and prosperity, and thus strengthen the defences of empire, and remove the motives to insurrection and disorder. And if a man is, as a Christian should be, absolute ruler over his own soul and body; if his conscience, his true and best self governs as well as reigns; if it does not hold its office at the good pleasure of a democracy of passions, each of which is playing for its own hand, and which collectively may proclaim a republic in the soul to-morrow morning, and send their present ruler about his business, no doubt, with a pension;—if, I say, a triumph of all the forces of moral disorder is not to take place within the human soul, its ruler must be constantly inspecting it, and judging it, that he may finish his royal course with joy, and arrest the judgment that must else await him, by constantly anticipating it.

II.

The motive for this self-judgment follows: We should not be judged, if we should judge ourselves.

Does this mean that a man who deals truly and severely with himself may always expect to escape human criticism? This is only partially true.

It is true, no doubt, that so far as we judge ourselves in matters which affect our intercourse with others, endeavouring to bring that intercourse into strict accord with the terms and principles of the law of Christ, we shall diminish the opportunities for hostile criticism on this score. A man who is severe upon himself every time that he loses his temper, is likely to lose his temper less and less frequently, and so to escape the judgments which other men always pass on those who do lose their tempers. A man who sincerely bewails and repents of and punishes himself for every statement that he knows himself to have made at variance with strict truth, will in time acquire a habit of scrupulous adherence to truth, and will thus not be open to the judgments which even men of the world pass on deflections from truth. A man who brings himself up for judgment to the bar of his own conscience whenever he finds himself talking about others in a manner that is not consistent with the law of charity, is pretty certain, as time goes on, to observe that law in what he says more and more strictly, and, as a consequence, to escape the condemnatory judgments of others which are naturally incurred by those who violate it. And there are other sins, such as theft or adultery, which human law is obliged to punish in the interests of society; and the man who sternly judges the incipient desires which lead to those great crimes, does thereby escape the judgments which follow on their commission.

In this sense self-judgment brings with it, in this world, its own reward. In whatever degree we cultivate, by self-discipline, the sincere, pure, humble, kindly, patient temper which is prescribed by the Teaching of our Lord, in that degree we diminish the number of points of friction with our brother men in the struggle of common life; and so escape the judgments which such friction provokes.

But it does not follow that those who judge themselves most severely are thereby always exempted from the unfavourable judgments of other men. For a very large number of men not only pass judgments upon the words and acts of others of which they can take cognizance, but also, and, strange to say, with equal confidence, upon the motives and secret character of others, of which, from the nature of the case, they can have no real knowledge whatever. Added to which, the large majority of men resent, perhaps almost unconsciously, a higher standard of life and conduct than their own. It is a tacit condemnation of their standard, and therefore they resent it as in some way pretentious and aggressive. They are bent on picking holes in those who profess it, and on making the worst of them that they can. Their thoughts have been put into words in a vivid passage of the Book of Wisdom.

“The Righteous, say they, is not for our turn,
And he is clean contrary to our doings :

He was made to reprove our thoughts.
He is grievous unto us even to behold :
For his life is not like other men’s,
His ways are of another fashion.

Let us see if his words be true,
Let us prove what shall happen in the end of him.

Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture,
That we may know his meekness, and prove his patience.
Let us condemn him with a shameful death : for by his own saying
he shall be respected.”¹

This is a dark side of human nature : but it is human nature none the less. When a great heathen philosopher² set himself to consider what would happen, if a really perfect man should appear upon the earth, his decision was

¹ Wisd. ii. 12, 14, 15, 19, 20.

² See Plato’s “Republic,” book ii.

an unconscious prophecy:—"Men would put him to death." Men who are not themselves trying to be holy, are impatient of holiness, and pass hard judgments, if they can do nothing more, on those who aim at it. And thus it has happened that all the great servants of God, although judging themselves severely, have been, again and again, judged by their fellow-men, with much greater severity. Where no sins are visible to the critic's eye, he will assert that there are secret sins, if they could only be discovered. When nothing can be alleged in the way of infraction of human law, some other sort of law is invented or appealed to, in order to show that some law has been broken. "The presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault in him, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."¹ So it has been with nearly all the finest characters in the Christian Church: they passed their lives constantly in a storm of calumny and insult, and only when they had left the world were recognized, if they were recognized, as being what they were. Nor is this wonderful, in the case of those who at best approached perfection, if it was also true in His case Who alone was perfect. "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household?"² When He, the King of Saints, made His home in a world of sinners, He did not withdraw Himself from the harsh judgments of men; He knew that these judgments have their provoking cause, not in the facts of life, but in the secret irritation of the human heart. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and ye say,

¹ Dan. vi. 4, 5.² St. Matt. x. 25.

Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.”¹

A man, then, who judges himself severely cannot on that account expect to disarm human judgments. But he may do much more: he may anticipate, and by anticipating arrest, the judgments of God. For the judgments of God light not on all sinners, but on impenitent sinners; and self-judgment is the effort and expression of penitence; it is the effort of the soul to be true to the highest law of its own being—which is the law of its Creator. All true repentance involves self-judgment—the placing instructed conscience on its rightful throne at the centre of the soul; the bringing before its tribunal the guilty past so far as it can possibly be recovered; the recognition of its guilt in the clear light of the awful and eternal law—the Law of Righteousness. Even within the soul the judgment is set and the books are opened, and the justice of God is vindicated and—such is His goodness—disarmed.

But, it will be asked—Does not all this leave out of account the One Sacrifice for sin; the One Name through Whom alone man is reconciled to God, and God to man? Is not this self-judgment an attempt on man's part to work out an atonement for himself, without the aid and agency of the Great Atoner?

That this is not really the case, we might be sure when we reflect that the Apostle who, more than any other writer in the New Testament, insists on the need and power of our Lord's Atonement for sin, is the Apostle who bids us judge ourselves, if we would not be judged. Self-judgment, if it be thorough and sincere, so far from leading us to think that we can do without the One Propitiation for sin made for us upon the Cross by our Lord Jesus Christ, ought to deepen in us the sense of our utter need of it. Self-judgment shows us what we are; it does not

¹ St. Matt. xi. 18, 19.

of itself enable us to become other than we are. It does not of itself confer pardon for the past, or strength to do better in the future. It bids us look out of and beyond ourselves to a Divine compassion, which is also a Divine justice, which, if we will, we can make our own by that complete and whole-hearted adhesion of the soul to truth, which the Bible calls faith. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."¹

That self-judgment both bids and enables us thus to look above and beyond ourselves for help, is especially apparent in the new force which it gives to prayer. It makes a man pray at once more intelligently and more earnestly than before. More intelligently, because when he has had himself up for a strict judicial investigation at the bar of his conscience, he knows what he needs, not in a vague general way, but in detail, and precisely. Instead of complaining to God generally of the corruption of his nature—a complaint which makes him in his own estimate no worse than all his neighbours—he lays his finger upon certain acts of evil which he only has committed. Instead of saying only in vague terms that he has erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep, he knows the times at which, and the places in which, and the acts or words by which, this erring and straying have taken place.

The general language of the Church, which is all that is possible for a large, mixed congregation confessing sins in unison, is illuminated, by the individual conscience of the man who has judged himself, with a meaning that is all his own. He knows where he has failed, and why; he knows what temptations have overpowered him, and where

¹ Rom. viii. 1, 2.

and how; he knows by fatal experience what sides of his character are most open to the assaults of the enemy, and the circumstances in which he may most easily be taken at a disadvantage. And this special knowledge gives to his prayer reality and force; he does not pray as a man who is using old language in a conventional and half-hearted way; he prays not from a sense of propriety, but as a man who knows the perils from which he would escape, the dangers which encompass him, the weaknesses and the propensities which embarrass him. He prays as for his life; and when his prayer issues in victory, he understands what he owes to the having judged himself honestly, and how, having judged himself, he will not, through God's mercy, be judged as an unrepentant sinner at the last.

This is surely a practical lesson for Advent Sunday; and if the question be asked how the Apostle's advice can best be reduced to a practical form, the answer is by our resolving to begin, if we have not begun, the daily practice of examination of conscience. Whether immediately before lying down to rest, or at some earlier hour, when the faculties of the mind are more entirely on the alert, but certainly at some time within each twenty-four hours, such an examination should take place. A short prayer for the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit; a rapid review of the places, persons, duties, actions, words, amidst which and in which the day has been passed; a careful record (better if put down on paper) of any deliberate sin against the known Will and Law of God; and then an earnest prayer for pardon through the precious Blood and Intercession of the Immaculate Lamb:—this is self-examination in a Christian life. It takes some little time at first, perhaps nearly a quarter of an hour; but we soon learn to read our consciences at a glance, like the face of a clock, and five, or at most eight, minutes

amply suffice. It makes no great difference, we may think, at the end of a single day whether we have performed this duty or not; but at the end of a week, if we keep a look out on ourselves, we shall see that it has made a considerable difference; and at the end of a year a difference so great that it cannot well be described in words. This daily, nightly rehearsal within the soul for that last tremendous scene of all which awaits us, all and each, familiarizes us with it in some sense by repeated anticipation; goes far towards robbing it of its awful strangeness; nerves us to look on the Face of the Judge upon the Throne of heaven by thus constantly looking on the Face of the Judge on the Throne of Conscience. And when at last the skies shall open, and the Son of Man appears surrounded by His angels, prepared to exact of each and all an account of things done in the body, happy will they be who have already thus sought the ground of their hearts, proved and examined their thoughts, obtained His pardon for that which, while it is unforgiven, He must condemn, and so having judged themselves during the days of their earthly pilgrimage, are only summoned at the last to judgment that they may receive His gracious acquittal, and His bright welcome to their Eternal Home.

SERMON VI.

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS.¹

I COR. xii. 1.

Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

LIKE the world at large, the Church of Christ has had, in every age of its existence, a certain number of what would now be called "questions of the day" in agitation. Some point as to its work among human souls, or its constitution, or its doctrine, or its formularies, or its relation to human society at large, or its relation to the public thought of the time, has been raised and brought prominently before the minds of men, and has been discussed with more or less warmth until at last a settlement has been arrived at. When St. Paul wrote this Epistle there were several questions of this kind in the Church of Corinth. One, as to how to deal with a gross case of incest; another, as to the dress and behaviour of Christian women; another, respecting the orderly administration of the Holy Communion; a fourth, as to the advisability of marriage under certain circumstances; and this respecting what were termed the "spiritual gifts." When St. Paul says that he would not have the Corinthians ignorant concerning "spiritual gifts," he certainly does not mean that he would not have them ignorant of the whole matter. There was for them little probability or danger of that, because at least within the Church of Corinth it is plain that

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, August 4, 1872.

these gifts were daily discussed, and with no little eagerness. But St. Paul's expression—which occurs elsewhere—is an intentionally reserved one; it expresses less than the writer's meaning, while it suggests that meaning most fully to his readers. St. Paul means that he is very anxious indeed that the Corinthians should have complete and accurate knowledge of these "gifts," of their origin, their purpose, and their importance.

I.

Now, the particular spiritual gifts to which St. Paul was referring at Corinth were not, as a whole, exactly like anything that is to be witnessed in the Church of Christ at the present day. They were not, indeed, more miraculous, because nothing can be more miraculous than any act whereby the Divine and Eternal Spirit infuses into a created soul some quality or grace which it did not before possess, such as love or peace. But, looked at from without, they were much more striking. They produced effects which challenged the attention of the eye and the ear, and were well calculated to fire the imagination. St. Paul mentions nine of these gifts in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. Of these, the "word of knowledge," the "word of wisdom," and "prophecy" were such as might be found on no inconsiderable scale at the present day in the Church of Christ. The "word of wisdom" would seem to be an eminent power of apprehending revealed truth in its relations towards the general field of human thought and knowledge—as we should say, of apprehending it philosophically. The "word of knowledge" implies an insight more or less profound into the several departments of revealed truth and their mutual relations to each other; while "prophecy," which means, neither in the Old or New Testament,

by any means always a power of foretelling the future, would here especially point to the power of stating truth and duty clearly and forcibly to others. The gift of "faith" here mentioned would probably be something distinct from the faith of ordinary believers—an extraordinary illumination of the believing soul, making God and the unseen world so vividly present to it, that all obstacles to duty seem straightway to vanish, or, as our Lord says, it removes mountains. This, too, is to be found in some gifted Christians in all ages of the Church. The other five gifts are less ordinary and usual. There were Christians at Corinth who had the "gift of healings," and others a more extended gift of "working of miracles;"—cases these in which the fire of the Holy Ghost, possessing, enlightening, warming the soul, made itself felt upon surrounding nature, and produced effects for which no known natural causes would account. Others, again, had the gift of "discerning spirits;" something deeper than any insight into character, although analogous to this great and not uncommon gift;—a power of seeing in other souls the exact endowment with which the Holy Spirit had furnished them, what was really the work of grace, what only the counterfeit of nature. Others, again, spoke with "tongues," probably, as at Pentecost, in foreign languages, with a view to missionary work among the strangers who were to be found about the port and streets of Corinth; probably also, and more frequently, in a mystic language, to which no human tongue corresponded, yet in which an entranced and illuminated soul might at times express itself. Others, again, had the power of "interpreting tongues;" it may be the foreign languages, but more probably the mystic language of devotion, which, but for the gifted interpreter, would have died away upon the ear of the audience without leaving an idea behind.

It was natural that the exercise of such endowments as

these should have led to a great deal of discussion at Corinth, where the subject was continually and very practically brought before the eyes and ears of the Christians. Questions were eagerly asked; often hastily and erroneously answered; and at length referred to the Apostle. Did all the gifts come from the same source, or were some of them from below, some from heaven? Were they all equally important? and, if not, which were the more important? Was not the striking and extraordinary gift of tongues entitled to greater consideration than the comparatively commonplace gift of teaching or prophecy? And, if so, was it not hard that some Christians should have gifts of the higher order, others only lower gifts; that some should be the eyes and hands of the Church, others its feet and less honoured members? Would not the possessors of the great gifts of speculative and administrative power be eyed with a certain amount of unavoidable jealousy by the possessors of humbler, if not less useful endowments? And, if so, were not the gifts of doubtful advantage to the Church? Was it not a mistake to think much of them? Might they not conceivably, some of them, belong to heathen necromancers, who, while they appeared to speak and act miraculously, yet in private called Jesus accursed? And, if so, was it not better to treat them as, at the best, matters of very subordinate importance?

St. Paul answers these questions, and in doing so he lays down principles of permanent and vital importance.

1. Every single gift, he says first of all, even the least, is important, because all come from a single source—the Divine and Eternal Spirit living and working in the Church of Christ. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of operations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Who worketh all in all.”

2. Next, he rules that the gifts do differ in importance, and that their importance is to be measured by their practical value to the Church of Christ. On this account he decides that the gift of tongues, which excited such enthusiasm at Corinth, is really less important than the relatively quiet and tame gift of teaching or prophecy, simply because the latter is of greater service to others—to the Church.

3. Thirdly, he will not allow that the possession of any gift ought to make the possessor an object of jealousy. Being a gift, it implies no merit in the possessor, but only in the Giver. It is given, too, not for the advantage or credit of the possessor of it, but for the good of the Church at large. No gift, accordingly, could really be possessed by the heathen outside the Church who cursed the Holy Name of Jesus; and no gift rendered its possessor independent of others in the Holy Body, or could be wholly monopolized for his own advantage. Even the eye could not say to the foot, "I have no need of thee."

4. Lastly, all these gifts were inferior to those which were shared in by all Christians in a state of grace—the graces of faith, hope, and charity, and especially to the last and greatest of these, the grace of charity—the love of God for His own sake, and the love of man in and for God.

This, briefly, is the knowledge which St. Paul was so anxious that the Corinthians should have; the sanctity of these endowments as coming all of them from the Holy Ghost; the difference of value between these endowments, proportioned to their varying serviceableness to the souls of men; the fact that no endowment or gift, however great, added importance to its possessor or made him rightfully an object of jealousy, since he only held it in trust and for the good of others; and the subordination of all these gifts to the great grace of charity.

II.

The importance of this knowledge to us at the present day appears to me to be undeniable.

We live at a time when men are disposed to ignore the very existence of the spiritual world—the presence and action of the Holy Ghost upon the souls of men. This is, perhaps, partly a reaction from some mistaken and fanatical ideas about His work which were to be found here and there in a past generation; but it is much more largely due to the immense place which the material universe holds in the thoughts, and especially in the imaginations, of the present generation. We have explored the realm of matter; we have subjugated it, we have made it at once our friend and our slave, in ways undreamt of by our forefathers. Our telescopes report even the geography of distant planets; our practical science places the great forces of steam and electricity under contribution to our needs; and we, the men of to-day, occupy, as compared with our ancestors, quite a new relation towards space and time; we converse hourly with the inhabitants of other continents; we pass from point to point with a rapidity which makes us, in fact, masters of the world in quite a new sense from that in which former generations of men were its masters. Hence, too, the sources of capital have been reached, and laid bare, as never before; and the loan of last week in Paris is but an illustration of what may be the enormous resources of a single country in modern Europe. All which enhances and sets forth the outward visible material side of human life has made unprecedented progress; the wealth of our generation is scarcely the measure of its luxury; and, in short, the realm of matter, with all its vastness, with all its mystery, with all its attractiveness and resource, presses around the human

soul as never before, and makes the realization of an immaterial world, at least for large classes among us, increasingly difficult. It is, I say, not a difficulty for the reason so much as for the imagination. As the eye rests upon the streets of this metropolis, which year by year become wider and more magnificent; upon the gigantic proportions of the traffic which crushes and jostles along them through the long hours of a summer day; upon the immense emporiums and constructive works of all kinds which rise almost month by month in every quarter of it—we insensibly accustom ourselves, I will not say to the conviction, but to the impression, that this great kingdom of matter which we are manipulating so successfully, is indeed everything, that there is nothing beyond but a realm of fancy, for which the pressing demands of practical life leave us less and less time and inclination.

Of course, when we reflect, we know that the problem of the universe and of life has not really been changed; that man is, amid all his triumphs, only what and where his forefathers were, a stranger hurrying across a scene which will soon have closed on him for ever. As the wise preacher of the Old Testament, Solomon, said to us in the Lesson of yesterday afternoon—describing, indeed, a different stage and phase of material civilization, but, as regards the whole question, summing up and anticipating the collective experience of the race: “I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards; I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit; I made me pools of water; . . . I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of provinces; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, . . . and that of all

sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem. . . . Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy. . . . Then I looked on the work my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do ; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.”¹

Yes, beneath all material splendours there is an aching void at bottom ; man was made for something higher and nobler than matter, and he cannot find his real satisfaction in it. He was made for God, and all that reminds man of his real destiny—yes, I will say it, of his true nobility—has a claim upon his ear and his heart that cannot be permanently ignored. When the Apostle cries, “Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant,” he touches a chord to which man, sooner or later, responds, because, in his deepest self, man is, and knows himself to be, a spirit. His real self is not affected by the money which he holds in his hand, by the robe which he wears on his person, by the servants who surround him that they may do his pleasure, by the titles with which his fellow-men approach him, by the house in which he dwells, or the position which he fills in the public eye. These things are far from being unimportant ; they are gifts of God ; they enter into his responsibility ; everything hereafter depends on his way of dealing with them. But they leave his real self unaggrandized ; it is something independent of them ; it is a deeper and more central thing than can be touched by these outward surroundings. And therefore man cannot permanently, even in this the very metropolis of the world’s material civilization, forget that higher gifts than any with which matter can furnish him are within his reach, and that it is not well to be ignorant of them.

¹ Eccles. ii. 4-11.

But they who know that something higher than matter is their true aim and portion, do not always fix their eye on the really spiritual. They mistake intellect for spirit; and imagine that in great mental accomplishments they are really raising themselves out of the slough of matter into the true sphere of their highest life. They do not distinguish between the contents of a good library, or the proceedings of a literary and scientific association—and the results of the Day of Pentecost. But man's reason and thought is but the instrument of his deepest self, of his personal being; it is not himself any more than his arms or legs. And to make spiritual mean merely mental or intellectual gifts, is to misuse language and introduce confusion into our thought.

Certainly the word "spiritual" is sometimes used, in modern literary English, of quick-witted or refined thought; but this debauched use of the word we owe to the French, and our own older usage distinguishes broadly and rightly between the life of the spirit, which believes and hopes and loves, and the life of the intellect, which only reasons and thinks. And spiritual gifts are far higher than merely intellectual gifts. The latter imply nothing as to the moral excellence of the inmost being itself. Voltaire's brilliancy was undeniable; but who would exchange solid peace of soul for a power of making the epigrams which delighted Paris, but which could not bring one hour of true rest or happiness to their author?

Do I say that material or intellectual gifts are worthless? God forbid. They, too, come from Him. "Every good gift," whether in nature or in grace, "and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."¹ His gifts to the old heathen world—its astonishing cultivation of thought, of fancy, of expression; its vast and varied exploits in the way of constructive

¹ St. James i. 17.

enterprise ; its burning passion and abundant genius for art ; its vigorous talent for administration and government—were worthy of admiration, as coming from Him. Even although these gifts were frequently, or rather, as a matter of course, misused, debased, sullied, by the presence of sin, they were in themselves admirable ; and we do well to honour and admire them, if only because of their Author. And all that He has given in addition (and what has He not given to the modern world ?) outside the Kingdom of His Son and independently of it,—our material and intellectual progress in all its departments—is matter, not for depreciation, still less for secret fear, but for thankful and generous acknowledgment, if only we remember that there are higher gifts beyond ; that when our architects, our merchants, our engineers, our historians, our poets, our metaphysicians have done their best, there is a sublimer sphere from which an Apostle warns us, “Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”

Doubtless, we here touch, as so often in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, upon mystery, that is to say, upon a truth of the reality of which we are convinced, but the full account and reason of which is, in our present state of knowledge, beyond us. Like the mystery of life and of growth, whether animal or vegetable, in Nature, like the mystery of the Sacraments, our chief means of Grace in the Kingdom of Christ, so the daily, hourly action of the Eternal Spirit upon Christian souls is a thing certain to us, yet beyond us. Who shall attempt to picture, much less describe, the process whereby He, the Eternal and Uncreated, overshadows, enwraps, penetrates, moulds, changes our finite and created spirits, bathing them, if we will, through and through with His Light and His Warmth ; endowing them with powers which, according to the original terms of their natural structure, are altogether strange to them ; fitting them, by anticipation here, amid

the scenes of sense and time, for a higher and better world? Who, indeed, shall say, since who knows enough of the nature and capacities of spirit to attempt a description? We can but recognize the fact, as a most real, although invisible miracle, daily, hourly taking place around us wherever the Divine Comforter breathes and works; rendered certain to faith by the unfailing promises of the Divine Christ; rendered certain to experience by observed changes in those around us, in disposition, in character, in spiritual insight, in the whole direction of thought and feeling—changes for which nothing natural will adequately account, and of which none can reasonably deny the high significance. From age to age the gifts of the Spirit may vary in their form; substantially they are ever the same to the end of time, and next to the Atoning Death of Jesus Christ and the power of His Blood to cleanse our sins, there is no fact of equal practical importance to human beings.

III.

In conclusion, taking the Apostle's words in their broadest sense, let us try to connect with them one or two practical considerations.

1. They furnish us with a guide to true ideas about Education—with a test and criterion of current educational theories. We live in an age when Education occupies a greater place in the mind of the country than perhaps ever before. It has, as we all know, been quite recently the subject of Imperial legislation; and there can be no doubt that for some time to come it will be among the foremost questions of the day. And we may rejoice on many accounts that this is so; that attention is so generally awakened to the great duty which each passing generation, which our own generation, owes to that which will succeed it. But then, what do we mean by Education? Do we

mean merely instruction in what is called, with a singular narrowness of meaning, useful knowledge—so much knowledge, that is, as is useful to a human being during his passage through this present life and in relation to it: reading, writing, arithmetic, a little history, geography; knowledge of the laws of the material universe, of the laws of life and health; knowledge of languages; knowledge of the course of human thoughts, or rather human guesses at the secret and meaning of our destiny? Is there nothing beyond? Is man really destined for a hereafter? Is there a body of knowledge within our reach which bears most clearly upon that hereafter? And is it not a matter of common sense to make this knowledge, too, a part of the instruction which we administer to our children for their highest good? Is a child only a mind which, like a carpet-bag, is to be crammed with as many facts huddled together as it can possibly hold? Is not a child a living soul or character to be trained, developed, exercised, strengthened, chastened, encouraged? And are not some assistances from above, some spiritual gifts, some graces, some Sacraments, some sources of light and strength needful, as a matter of practical fact, for this? Ah, when I hear of schemes of Education which are only schemes for packing the mind full of facts, and which include among those facts almost everything except what bears upon that one subject which it is most important for a human being to know, a voice from above sounds in my ears, "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." What will it profit to have measured and weighed the realm of matter, to have explored and studied the achievements of thought, if, after all, God's gifts to the soul—His gifts of a new birth, of a new insight into truth, of a robe of righteousness wherein one day it may appear before Him without confusion—are altogether ignored?

2. See, too, in this sentence of the Apostle's a rule for forming friendships. The importance of friendships as exercising decisive influence upon a man's character and life, was perhaps as well understood in the ancient world—to say the least—as now. The ancients made friendships and kept them up in a more formal and regulated way than we do. Like Cicero and others, they wrote elaborate treatises on the subject, and reduced it as far as they could to a matter of method and rule. Perhaps before the idea of a universal brotherhood in Christ had dawned upon the world, a sincere attachment between two men or women had a significance which we with difficulty can appreciate; at any rate, the ancients were right in estimating very highly the moral importance of friendship. A friend at once reflects and moulds character; his influence penetrates, in a thousand ways, into the recesses of thought and feeling; he leaves his mark there; he is a help or a hindrance, a blessing or a curse, as the case may be. In choosing a friend, therefore, or (to speak more truly with a view to what is generally the fact) in allowing one's self to glide into a friendship, it is most important to ask ourselves what it is precisely that attracts us. Is it a good income, a great position, a splendid home? These are not the man who is to be our friend; they are the accidents of his life, not its essence. Is it a fertile imagination, a vigorous reason, a sparkling wit? These, alas! are compatible with the worst degradations in the man himself. What is his real character? What are the qualities of his heart? What are, properly speaking, his spiritual endowments? What is his faith in the unseen, his hope of an eternal future, his love of God and of man? These are the questions to be answered. Concerning these spiritual gifts, in a matter of such vital import, do not let us willingly be ignorant.

3. Lastly, here is a rule for all steady and systematic

efforts at self-improvement. It is common, but it is perilous, to get older without getting better. And improvement in outward circumstances, improvement in mental accomplishments, are not here and now in question. Of the first it has been written, "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him."¹ Of the second, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."²

Improvement in spiritual endowments is the point; if not in the present counterparts of those exact gifts of illumination and utterance, of works of power and works of mercy, which St. Paul had in his eye in the Church of Corinth, at least in the graces which the Apostle tells us are higher than these in the sight of the Giver, and which, as they are offered to all Christians by the Divine Spirit, so all Christians should know and possess them—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These great gifts of the Spirit do not pass; they become incorporate with the life of the soul; they give it its force, its beauty here. We do not drop them with all else at the grave; we carry them with us into the Eternal Presence-Chamber.

Let us make the most of the means of grace, as they are termed, while we may; of the certificated channels, that is, through which these gifts reach us; of prayer, first of all, of the Divine Scripture, of the Holy Sacraments. Life is too short to allow any man to do or know everything; there is much of which we may safely and even profitably be ignorant; but as immortal beings we dare not ignore or neglect the gifts which the Eternal Spirit bestows upon us here, that they may robe us in a happy immortality hereafter.

¹ Ps. xlix. 17.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

SERMON VII.

PROMPTINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.¹

I COR. xii. 3.

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

IT is not easy at first sight to understand St. Paul's object in this passage. He seems to be laying down first of all a truism, about which there can be no discussion whatever; and next a proposition, as to the truth of which there is apparently very large room for question indeed. The statement that "no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed," seems to a Christian to be so obviously true, and to fall so far short of what might be affirmed with truth, that there is no more to be said on the subject. On the other hand, the statement that "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," seems to imply that the aid of the Holy Spirit is necessary for an object which might be sufficiently attained by a use of the natural faculties, and of the opportunities for arriving at truth which are placed in our way. St. Paul himself is conscious that he is saying something which might not at first sight approve itself to his readers, or which at least requires their careful attention. The phrase "I give you to understand," is one of the turns of speech which he employs, when he wishes

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, August 1, 1880.

to stir the minds of men to an unusual effort. "I give you to understand." He puts his Apostolic authority in the foreground, in order to recommend a truth which would of itself occasion scruple or difficulty. "I give you to understand." His readers must at first, perhaps, take him on trust; they must think over what he is saying; they must pray over it; they must act, for a time, on the assumption of its being true; and then, after a time, they will be enabled to see their way for themselves. They will see for themselves something of the Apostle's real meaning, both when he seems to be saying that which no Christian can dispute, and when he seems to be taking a position which many a man, using his ordinary power of observation, might hesitate to accept.

I.

"No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed."

To you and me—to all of us who have been taught, as best we may, to love and worship our Lord and Saviour, and to look forward to being with Him, and seeing His Blessed Face unveiled for ever and ever as the crowning happiness of heaven—it seems at first a trite and needless thing to say that "no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus"—our adorable Lord—"accursed." We should think not, indeed! We have difficulty in understanding how it ever can have been necessary to say this.

Depend upon it, dear brethren, that if we had been living at Corinth eighteen hundred and odd years ago, and had witnessed what was going on, within and without the Christian Church there, we should have seen plainly enough that it was very necessary to say that which seems to us so obvious.

The Church of Corinth, as we all know, was, in the

early Apostolic age, the scene of some unusual and striking exhibitions of the power of the Holy Spirit. Of these, the two most remarkable were the gift of tongues, and the gift of prophecy. The tongues were, it seems, a mystical language—a language full of deep meaning to the inspired souls which uttered it, but unintelligible to others—unintelligible until it was rendered into ordinary speech by some Christian who possessed the correlative gift of interpretation. Prophecy was not only, or chiefly, the power of foretelling future events; it was the power of uttering high moral and spiritual truth—generally truth very greatly in advance of the knowledge and convictions of the mass of those who listened to it. And these gifts were not confined to Apostles and Evangelists—to those who had received by Ordination a commission and powers enabling them, as well as binding them, to propagate the Faith. On the contrary, they were shared in by all classes of the Christian Church; and their variety, their beauty, oftentimes their magnificence, their wide diffusion, created, on the one hand, no doubt, great admiration and enthusiasm; but also, on the other, no small amount of bewilderment. Put yourselves in the position of those who witnessed them in Corinth, where any person, however simple, might at any moment proclaim some startling truth, before unheard of, in terms which could not but command the attention of the Church, and you will understand the difficulties which would have presented themselves. For side by side with the real gift was its clever human counterfeit; and who was to distinguish always, and with unerring accuracy, between the counterfeit and the true? In point of fact, there was great ignorance among the Christians at Corinth about this higher work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man. Hence the Apostle's anxiety, "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." This

ignorance was twofold. The Corinthians did not know what was inconsistent with the character and work of the Holy Spirit, in an utterance professing to come from Him. And further, they did not know what kinds of truth must be His inspiration, if sincerely uttered at all; what sort of sayings—human nature being what it is—were impossible without His aid.

Of these two kinds of ignorance, the first must appear to us Christians nowadays very astonishing. There were some at Corinth who claimed to speak at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and who, when in a state of ecstasy, exclaimed, "Accursed be Jesus." These Corinthians were almost certainly Jews, who had mixed a great deal with Christians, and who had caught something of the enthusiasm which was created within the Church by the presence of the extraordinary gifts vouchsafed to it. When a number of simple people, not devoted by office to the propagation of the Faith, or to the work of teaching and feeding souls, were yet enabled to talk a mystic language which others discovered to have a rare and beautiful meaning, or to utter in plain language high and searching moral truths, or to foretell future events, or to reveal the secrets of character and destiny—these high and supernatural accomplishments naturally produced a great deal of sensation in communities external to the Church, as well as within its pale. And, with this sensation, there came in some cases an instinctive effort to imitate; so that Jews too claimed to prophesy just as Christians prophesied; and one of the sayings uttered by these Jewish prophets was "Accursed be Jesus."

What was the origin of this sentence, so shocking to Christian ears? It probably dates, at Corinth at any rate, from the time when St. Paul seceded formally from the local synagogue to the house of Justus, and when Crispus, the most influential person in relation with the Jewish

community, was converted to the faith of Christ. These events, which are described in the Acts of the Apostles, would have produced exasperation among the Jews of the place, who saw in this advance of the Christian Church, now distinctly detached in its working and its sympathies from the older religion, an unnatural revolt against what they held to be the only true religion. They traced this revolt not merely or chiefly to the energetic missionary living in their midst, but to the Author and Finisher of the New Faith Himself, to the crucified Prophet of Nazareth, Who had given the first impulse to, and was still the Centre and Object of, the New Religion. "Accursed be Jesus." Yes! in these words the hatred which had stirred up riots at Thessalonica and at Ephesus, and which long before had surged in mockery and insult at the foot of the Cross on the day of Calvary, found a congenial expression—a brief and explicit creed that was all its own. And what was already deep in the popular Jewish heart, found utterance in the Jewish prophet, who, while claiming to speak from heaven, only represented the feeling of his people—"Accursed be Jesus." It was a profession of faith, as well as an outburst of passion—simple, clear, forcible—in its, to our ears, finished blasphemy.

The singular thing is that there should have been any Christians at Corinth who would regard such an utterance with any sort of sympathy. Yet it seems to be implied by the Apostle that there were. These Christians were probably intent on one consideration only—the variety and magnificence of the spiritual gifts at Corinth. It was the presence of the *gifts*, not the use that was made of them, which chiefly interested these Christians. What was said seemed of little account, if only it was uttered in a striking way, and with an air of authority, or an air of higher intuition. The saying uttered might be deplorably wrong; but then the prophet was so brilliant, so

original, so possessed by the force and fire of a great enthusiasm, that it would be surely heartless to criticise. He might differ from other prophets; but were they not all seeking the same object? Were they not all tending towards the same goal? Did not all these striking manifestations proceed from the same Infinite Being, Who was thus shedding His grace and power upon weak and sinful men?

No! St. Paul will not have it. "No man," he says, "speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed."

In this sentence we hear a warning, first, against a false liberalism. Christianity is, beyond all doubt, and in a most serious sense, liberal. For Christianity is a creed, whose practical side is charity; and charity hopes for the best, makes large allowances for the lack of opportunity, draws sharp dividing lines between what is certain and what is only probable, recognizes in those whom instructed faith must pronounce to be in error, all that palliates, all that explains and justifies; it strains a point, when needful, to do justice to an opponent, and to soften a difference which has been magnified by unintelligence or by passion. Certainly charity is Christianity in action; and charity is liberal; but what true charity and true liberality cannot and will not do, is knowingly to blur the outlines of ascertained truth, or to represent the ascertainment of truth as a matter of indifference, or to maintain that contradictory propositions are equally true. Indifference to truth is not charity; it is, on the contrary, due to the absence of a true love for God, the Author of truth, and for man, to whose soul truth is light and life. If the prophets who cried, "Accursed be Jesus," were right, if they were other than blasphemers, the Christian hope was itself a delusion, and the Christian Church was based on an imposture. If they were wrong, they were fatally wrong, and no earnestness, no eloquence,

no enthusiasm could make their work that of the Spirit of Truth and Holiness.

The standard of a prophet's inspiration was not the emotion that possessed him, but the relation of what he uttered to the Faith of the Apostolic Church. As under the Old Covenant the rule ran, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word it is because they have no light in them,"¹ so under the New, prophecy or teaching must be according to the proportion of Faith. The Faith, or body of truth revealed by God, judges the teacher, not the teacher the Faith; and it is a false liberalism—false to God and false to the dearest interests of man—to pay compliments to that which contradicts what is already known to be true.

Secondly, we have here a warning against thinking too much of religious passion. I say of religious passion—for religion is a passion before it becomes a virtue; it is one of the original elements of man's natural outfit; it is one of the strongest passions that can move the human soul. Just as wealth, and beauty, and reputation, and many objects of sense stir in man corresponding passions which it is the business of conscience to keep in order and to train, so it is with the idea of the Invisible World. As man thinks of what lies beyond the frontier that can be reached by the senses—and long before he is in possession of a Revelation from heaven to tell him what it is, he is deeply moved, in one way or another, by an emotion which is an integral part of his nature, and which cannot be repressed. The religious sense or passion is not itself a gift of God the Holy Spirit; it is a part of man's earliest outfit as man, and what the Holy Spirit does is to furnish this natural emotion with a true and rightful Object, and to purify it from the alloy of selfishness and sense. Religious passion is found in attendance

¹ Isa. viii. 20.

on the sublimest truths and on the most degrading errors; nay, it may be closely linked to passion which is as remote as possible from anything that can be called religion. We watch it in the priests of Baal, whom Elijah slew at Carmel, cutting themselves with knives in order to propitiate their idol-deity. We listen to it in the hall of Pilate, when the whole Jewish multitude, in frenzied devotion to what they fancied to be the requirements of an older creed, cried, "Crucify Him." But we also hear its voice in the over-eager Apostle: "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee;" and we see it at work in the penitent Magdalen, prostrate at the feet of the Divine Master, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Religious passion has again and again sustained the martyr, and, withal, nerved the arm of his executioner; and, until we know something of its Object, the presence of such passion is religiously worthless, while if we know that its object is false or evil, it is worse than worthless.

The question is, not whether a man feels strongly about religion, but what the religion is about which he feels. There could be no doubt about the strong feeling of the Jewish prophets at Corinth, who cried "Accursed be Jesus;" but no strength of feeling, no eloquence, no enthusiasm could change the character of that utterance, or make it anything else or less than a hateful blasphemy.

II.

If some Corinthians were willing to ascribe to the Holy Spirit anything which a prophet of the day might choose to utter, there were others who thought that any religious truth might be understood and proclaimed without His aid.

It would seem that the Christian prophets among the Corinthians had a short saying of their own, which was a set-off against the blasphemous epigram of the synagogue.

Just as the Jews in the synagogue said, "Jesus is accursed," so the Christians at the house of Justus said, "Jesus is the Lord." It satisfied their loyalty, their love, their enthusiasm; but there were some among them who thought that this might be said, as a serious Christian should say it, without the aid of the Holy Ghost. What could be simpler, what more obvious, at least for a Christian, who knew what Jesus had been, and had done, and taught, than to say that He was the Lord? It was like saying that the sun was bright, or that ice was cold; it was putting into words an impression which was inevitable, at least for all reasonable people.

No! St. Paul would not allow this any more than the other mistake, about the work of the Holy Spirit. If it is easy to attribute to Him that which is of human and sinful origin, it is at least as easy to imagine that His assistance can be dispensed with, or that His work in man is man's work in and for himself.

"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." St. Paul does not, of course, mean that the human lips cannot utter the sentence, "Jesus is the Lord," without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. By 'saying' he means, 'saying from the heart; saying with full conviction of the truth of what is said.' To say that "Jesus is the Lord" in this sense is, according to St. Paul, a work to which man, left to his own resources, is unequal; it is the work of God the Holy Ghost in the soul.

Why is this? Why cannot a man recognize the Divinity of Jesus by the exercise of his natural faculties, and when he has recognized it, say that he has done so? Why must the Holy Spirit intervene to teach this any more than other kinds of truth? Why does not the truth of the Divinity of Jesus recommend itself so irresistibly to man's natural faculty for perceiving truth, as to make the action of the Holy Spirit unnecessary?

The reason is twofold. It is found partly in the understanding of man, and partly in his will ; the will and the understanding being what they are, that is to say, impaired and enfeebled by man's separation from God at the Fall.

(a) We can easily understand that in St. Paul's day, a profession of faith in Christ's Divinity required resolution. When a man had made up his mind that the Apostle's teaching was true, he needed courage to say so. He had little in this world to gain, and he had much to lose by saying so. Ninety-nine out of a hundred men, whom St. Paul would have met in the streets of Corinth, upon hearing that he believed a Crucified Jew to be Divine, would have pronounced him first of all a fool, and then a mischievous fool. Their first feeling would have been contempt ; their second, inspired by reflection, would have been hatred. And hatred is never inactive, except under compulsion ; it takes its measures with deliberation and vigour ; and what those measures were in the Apostle's days we know well enough. Thus to profess the faith that Jesus is the Lord required resolution.

It was a very different thing from professing faith in the report which a Greek traveller might have made of some country which he had explored. Some men might think his story credible ; others incredible ; others might suspend their judgment ; but, whichever course men took, nothing depended on it. No exasperation was produced by professing faith in the traveller's story ; no practical consequences were necessarily attached to it ; no anxiety could arise as to the future of those who might have heard and rejected it. Faith in Christ's Divinity meant faith in a truth which could not but be of the greatest practical importance ; which involved duties, which required sacrifices, which made other beliefs at once necessary and important, which obliged a man to take quite a different

view of the world and of life from that of the man who did not hold it.

Brethren, we know little indeed about ourselves, if we have not discovered the power of the will over the action of the understanding. The will has an intelligent instinct of its own; it sees the consequences of the conclusions at which the understanding is likely to arrive before they are reached, and while they are yet doubtful. The will sees a conviction coming,—a conviction which will oblige it to act or to suffer,—and human nature being what it is, the will at once and instinctively endeavours to stifle or shatter the conviction. We talk of our conduct being governed by our convictions; we forget how largely our convictions are shaped by our conduct. We believe, at least to a great extent, what we wish to believe; and we wish to believe that which will not cost us much in the way of effort or endurance; we wish this and no more, always supposing us to be left to ourselves, with the average human nature and instincts which our first father has bequeathed to us.

Here, then, is the first reason for the necessity of the Holy Spirit's interference to enable a man to believe and profess faith in the Divinity of Jesus. The Holy Spirit must surely intervene so far as to restore freedom to the human will, thereby preventing its mischievous action upon the understanding. The will must be at least willing to accept truth when seen to be truth; and this willingness is itself a gift of the Holy Ghost to fallen man—a great and priceless gift, of which it is impossible to think or speak too highly. The greater the practical demands of a given truth, the more needful is this high impartiality of the will; and therefore in no case is it more necessary than in that of our Lord's Divinity,—which, when it is really believed, leads to so much, and demands so much.

(β) But a second reason is supplied by the understanding. The effect of the Fall upon the understanding has been to impair man's perception of spiritual truth. Natural truth is as plain to us as the sunlight; but spiritual truth is like the more distant stars, it must be viewed through a telescope if it is to be seen to any purpose at all. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."¹

Consider what would have been the mental difficulties of reaching the truth of our Lord's Divinity in the age of the Apostles. At no time is it easy for the mass of men to understand and do justice to a great character. A great character is like a lofty mountain—most of us stand at its base; we see only the lower buttresses of the mountain—the summit is hidden from us. In order to see the summit, and to understand how the lower outworks of the mountain fall into their true place as its supporters, we must, if we are near it, have ascended another height ourselves—we must have done that which is beyond the range of the effort which most of us make. And thus it is that in all generations great characters are misunderstood by their contemporaries or those who live near their times; and history is full of the records of great men, who have only been seen in the true outline of their characters when those who saw and spoke with them have passed away. So it was with some of the greatest names in heathendom; so it has been in each successive age of the Christian Church; and, doubtless, there are among us now men and women whose real moral superiority to the mass of those around them is only suspected by a few, and would be indignantly rejected by the many if it were announced to them.

But if this be true of human greatness, what must be

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

said of a Superhuman greatness, such as was that of our Lord Jesus Christ? A heathen had said that if a really perfect man were to appear on earth, he would be put to death by his fellow-men. What, then, was to follow, when Perfection was such as to point to a greatness infinitely more than human? We know, as a matter of fact, what did follow, in the case of the mass of the Jews. They freely ascribed His miracles to Beelzebub; they said that He was a Samaritan, and had a devil. For them He had no moral form nor comeliness, and when they saw Him, there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. They treated His claim to be what He is as blasphemy, and they put Him to a cruel and shameful death. And when St. Paul wrote all this was recent; and the opinion of the world was, on the whole, entirely adverse to the claims of Jesus Christ. If a man was to rise above the prejudices of the time; if he was to see what those words, those acts, that character, really meant; if he was to understand how the Cross was as much a revelation of Divine love as the Transfiguration was of Divine glory, he must be guided by a more than human teacher; he must be taught by the Spirit to say, "Jesus is the Lord."

And is this much less true of our time, although it be true in a different way? Thousands of Christians say Jesus is the Lord without thinking what is involved in that blessed but awful Creed. Those who say, "Jesus is a good Man, but he is not the Lord," are not here in question; their religion is confessedly a vitally different thing from the religion of St. Paul and of the Christian Church; and they are only too likely, as time passes, to deny even that His goodness is real,—since, assuredly, supposing Him to be only a man, it is very hard indeed to reconcile human goodness with His persistent claims to be the Son of God. Of these I am not now speaking,

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but of the thousands who say the Creed of the Church of Christ, and in it proclaim Christ to be "the Only Begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, being of one Substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made." A man who believes this must needs believe much more; for him Christ is not the Greatest of human religious teachers, but the Object as well as the Author of the One Religion that comes from God. Nor is this all. If we believe that Christ is Divine, all that He said, all that He did, all that He instituted, all that He promised, while He was on earth, is lighted with a new radiance: the authority of the Gospels, the virtue of the Atoning Death, the grace of the Sacraments, the truth of all that is promised and threatened beyond the grave, rests on a basis which is seen to be unassailable. No man can say that Jesus is the Lord with a perception of the consequences of saying so, but by the Holy Ghost. He teaches us to read the Bible with new eyes, to trace its Unity beneath all the varieties of age and style and authorship, and to find the Divine Christ everywhere in it; He kindles in the penitent soul a love which understands the Infinite Love of the Divine Victim on Calvary; He bids us look beyond the outward form in the Sacraments to the inward reality—the Divine Christ cleansing and feeding those who approach with repentance and faith; He makes the eternal future not less real to us than the passing present; and by the light that He sheds on the path of life, its joys and its sorrows, its fears and its hopes, its triumphs and its failures, its course and its close, we see how infinitely little is all that ends with time, and how unspeakably important all that tells, in whatever sense, for eternity.

Let us pray, dear brethren, for a larger gift of God the Holy Ghost, to the Church at large and to our individual

souls. Now, as in the days of the Apostles, He is given to earnest prayer. Let us beware of ascribing to Him that which comes of the heat of unhallowed human emotion; let us yield ourselves trustfully to the inward discipline of thought and feeling by which the Spirit has taught sixty generations of Christians to own the true Divinity of their Crucified Master, and so to advance surely and steadily towards their Eternal Home.

On p 107. The reference is quoted more fully in Mackay's "Inherent Value of the Holy Sacrament." p 87

SERMON VIII.

CONSIDERATION FOR CRIMINALS.¹

I COR. xii. 26.

If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.

THE time-honoured custom, my Lord Mayor, which brings your Lordship, accompanied by her Majesty's judges, and by the great officers of the Corporation of London, to St. Paul's Cathedral at the opening of the legal term, is not a ceremony which has outlived the original reasons for its observance. It has, we must all feel, a substantive and enduring value. It portrays, after a vivid and picturesque fashion, so as to appeal to the public imagination with success, those historical relations of mutual respect and practical co-operation, which, since the days of our early Saxon forefathers, have subsisted between the City and the Church of London. But it has a higher and wider significance even than this. It proclaims the never-to-be-forgotten truth that religious and civil authority flow from a common source, and have kindred, although not identical, objects. It reminds us that as civil government will most certainly and effectually secure the safety of society and the temporal well-being of the people by invoking the blessing and promoting the honour of Almighty God, so the Church of Christ should, when opportunity presents itself, give all the assistance and sanction at its disposal to those efforts for the general good

¹ Preached (before the Lord Mayor and Judges) at St. Paul's, on the Second Sunday after Easter, April 19, 1874.

which belong to the administration of a great country, or of a great city like this. Above all, as it appears to me, an occasion like the present represents an alliance, which was certainly intended to be maintained throughout all time, and which cannot be interrupted without serious disaster—I mean, the alliance between morality and law. Law is, theoretically, the embodiment of morals; morality, the soul of law. Law is the effort to give practical effect to those portions of moral truth which protect life and property in the government of society. Morality supplies the motives, the sanctions, of which law, as dealing with outward acts, knows little or nothing, and thereby makes the task of law easier, less mechanical. Morality does not always cover the same ground as law; law has nothing to say to infractions of a Commandment like the tenth, and law, too, has purely technical districts which are beyond the sphere of morality. Sometimes, indeed, at particular times, in particular countries, as in such a question as that of divorce, law and morality deal differently with the same subject; and law permits what morality, as taught by its highest exponent, our Lord Jesus Christ, cannot possibly sanction: but as a rule law is merely the application to social life of that Eternal Moral Truth which is not the creation, but the very Nature of God; and therefore law is invested, in Christian eyes, with the interest which is always shown on occasions like the present.

A Christian Church has other characters and functions, but it is eminently the temple and guardian of moral truth. And when the highest representatives of the law of England take part in the ceremonial of to-day, they are not going through an elaborate but empty pageant—they are asserting a principle. Like the pilgrims of a distant age, journeying at long intervals from some far-off home to visit the cradle of their faith—the footsteps of

the Apostles—so does law, now and then, seek a respite from the vast and intricate labours which the ever-varying circumstances of modern civilization impose on it, to revisit as it were, under the shadow of the Christian Church, those original truths which it endeavours to apply and enforce; that unrepealed and eternal Morality which lives and will live for ever in the Decalogue, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Apostolical Epistles.

These are the reflections which would be chiefly suggested by an occasion like that of to-day; but other thoughts crowd upon the mind, and of these one is, How little we Christians, in our usual way of thinking and talking about the processes of criminal law, are wont to do justice to Christian principles. I mention criminal law, for law makes itself chiefly felt by the penalties which it inflicts on those who break it. It is true in society, as in conscience, that by the law is the knowledge of sin; and law does not exist for those who freely desire that which it endeavours to secure. We are, in fact, most conscious of the power and functions of the law when some great criminal case is engaging the attention of the country; and the question which I wish to ask this afternoon is, What is our usual way of looking at such cases?—a question which, I submit, is of religious importance to each of us, as it concerns the interests of all.

St. Paul's words in the text will throw some light on the bearings of this question. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." St. Paul has been here understood in a narrower sense than his real one. He is illustrating the duties of members of a Christian Church towards each other, by an analogy which Plato and others had used with reference to the State—the analogy of the close connection which subsists between the different limbs of the human body. If, he argues, the eye could do without the hand, or the head without the feet, then might

the far-sighted and influential members of the Corinthian Church dispense with the support and sit lightly to the sympathies of their humbler brethren. But if the body is not one limb, but many; if each has its place and its duties; then also in the Church of Christ is there a like place, honour, work, for all; all are necessary to the common weal; all have rights and duties; nay, the feeble and unattractive have peculiar claims, a more abundant comeliness, in the eyes of true Christian charity and discernment. And, further, if the body is really an organic whole; if its several members and functions are not independent of each other, but, on the contrary, are connected by nerves and muscles, by joints and bands—many, delicate and intricate enough—so that the injury, mutilation, or shock of any one is felt throughout the system; then must men in the Church of Christ, as a higher and more sensitive organism, instinct, presumably at least, with the Spirit of her Head, and holding together her many members in the strong and tender bands of a common faith and hope and charity:—much more, I say, in her must an injury to any one be felt quickly and deeply by all. “If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.”

Now, it is often supposed that the suffering mentioned in this passage is only such suffering as comes to us in God’s providence, for our discipline or improvement. Men read it as if it meant, “If one Christian is ill, or loses his property, or his relatives, all Christians who know him share his sorrow”—and that, no doubt, is partly what the text does mean. But it means more than this. It means, “If one Christian does wrong, his wrong-doing is a matter of common concern; all, in a certain degree, are damaged by it; all, in a certain degree, are responsible for it.” Remark, my brethren, that in St. Paul’s eyes mere physical pain counts for much less than moral evil.

The true agony is that of the conscience. The wounds inflicted by the devil on the soul are worse than the wounds inflicted by the sword upon the body. And they were moral wounds which were chiefly in St. Paul's mind, when he wrote to the Church of Corinth. That Church was torn by schisms, and polluted by evils of a more serious kind. In particular there had been a gross case of incest, which the Corinthians had treated with an easy indifference. "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned." Such crimes—all crimes ought, St. Paul contends, to be felt as a misfortune weighing upon all; all are wounded in the wound of one: "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."

I.

Does our ordinary estimate of crime embody the spirit of these words? My brethren, I appeal to your consciences, to your memories. From time to time a celebrated case takes up the prominent columns of the leading newspapers, and is the talk of the town, almost of the world. We follow it from the beginning to the close, from the first suspicion of the prisoner's guilt to his sentence. We have been interested, perhaps, by the strangeness of the circumstances, or, on the other hand, by their naturalness and the probability of their recurrence; we have acquired as time went on a personal interest in the story; we have learnt something of all the persons concerned till they have become almost acquaintances; we have studied the geography, the scenes of the leading incidents; we have weighed the conflicting evidence, and balanced and re-adjusted opposing probabilities, and analyzed the motives at work, and reviewed our analysis. And the Press, which has supplied us day by day with the material for all this varied interest, as if such supply were not enough,

has, at any rate at the close of the trial, invited us to retrace, under the guidance of a larger experience or a deeper insight, the whole ground which we have already traversed, till the case has become part of our daily stock of thought and interest. My brethren, I need not go very far back, if it were necessary to justify this description; but the question which I wish to ask is this: Do we feel that we ourselves are in any way concerned? Is it not notorious that we do not? Is not our interest in the proceedings just like the interest which is felt in a novel? People like to read novels, because on the one hand the circumstances are like their own; while on the other, they themselves are not, as in actual life, burdened with any sense of responsibility for anything that may happen in the story. And people read reports of a criminal trial in just the same spirit. "It is very interesting," they say, "very horrible; but then I have nothing to do with it."

This criminal, whom we have studied till his physiognomy, his habits, his modes of speech, his character, are as familiar to us as those of our near relatives, is, as we conceive, severed from us by chasms so many, so deep, so wide, that we conceive ourselves as little responsible for him as if he had lived and sinned in the interior of Africa. There is a chasm of education, it may be; there is a chasm of religious convictions; there is a chasm of social standing; there is a chasm of political feeling. He belongs to a district, a set of circumstances, a set of people, with whom we never had, nor could have, any possible connection. So we stand on the other side of the great trench which runs, as we conceive, between us and him, where we can observe him at leisure, through our glasses, just as if he were a wild creature in the Zoological Gardens. And then, when he is convicted and sentenced, we say, "He has got his deserts, he is rightly served;

don't let us have any maudlin sentimentality ; society is well rid of him." So we shut up our novel, and fall back, with a sense of languor and exhaustion, upon tamer subjects and everyday duties, till a new excitement presents itself.

Is not this, my brethren, a common way of looking at a trial which brings a great criminal before the world ? And, I ask you, my brethren, is it justifiable, is it Christian ? nay, more, is it warranted by the facts of the case if they are patiently considered ?

II.

There are three great principles clearly stated in the Gospel which ought, I submit, to govern a Christian's thought in his estimate of a great criminal case.

I. Of these, the first is the fact that every criminal is—to a certain extent—the product of his age, of the spirit, and of the society, in which he has passed his life. Just as certain marshy districts and damp atmospheres are favourable to the growth of troublesome or malignant insects, so particular moods of popular feeling and opinion are favourable to the growth of crime. This is, of course, a doctrine which may be pushed too far : no criminal is simply and altogether the helpless, unconscious product of his circumstances. To suppose that would be a libel upon the Justice of God : it would reduce human justice to the level of those unthinking reprisals upon nature which have been observed among savages ; it would be also contrary to experience. The principle of free-will in man—that prerogative endowment which distinguishes him, even more than reason, from the brute creation—is never necessarily enslaved by anything external to itself. Abraham was not bound by the superstitions of his ancestral home ; nor Moses by the seductions of the Court

of Egypt ; nor Elijah by the apostasy of all save a fraction of his countrymen ; nor Daniel by the imposing splendours and stern terrors of the land of his captivity. Man is never so true to himself—never so conscious of the place which his Maker has assigned to him in the scale of creation, as when, like Samson in the valley of Sorek, he breaks the green withs and the new ropes with which some Delilah would enchain his moral liberty, “as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire ;” when he brushes aside with a strong hand the pressure of opinion and the importunity of circumstance, and asserts that which is the most truly human as well as the most truly Divine of the endowments of his nature—his capacity for free choice.

But, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the majority of us are largely governed by the influences amidst which we pass our life ; and that some are—they need not be, but they are—wholly governed by such influences. For such men, to breathe an atmosphere of moral corruption is to become a criminal. The final crime which brings them under the notice of the law may be, to all appearance, an independent and voluntary act : the law, at any rate, cannot consent to take any other view of it. But in reality it is largely due to the long and subtle co-operation of a variety of unseen influences acting upon an uninformed understanding or upon a weak and ductile will ; it is almost, although not quite, the product of the atmosphere into which the man’s conscience has been plunged, from his youth until now. And for the existence of this atmosphere who is responsible ? ‘Not I,’ at any rate, would be the answer of most of us. ‘I have my own shortcomings ; I do not deny that. I have my own sphere of responsibility, but it does not embrace the moral world ; it is a very limited one. I have done harm to others which I can trace, and which I bitterly

remember; but this man, of whose name I never heard, whose home is some hundred miles distant from mine, whose relatives and friends are unknown to me, and belong to a different class of life—this man certainly does not add, by his crime, to my existing moral responsibilities.’

My brethren, are you quite so sure of that? Doubtless you have not contributed directly, or in any way that you can trace and map out, to this particular misdemeanour—this theft, this murder, this perjury, this arson. But have you contributed nothing to the existing state of mind, the state of feeling which made it easy to the criminal? There is a general stock of evil in the world to which we all contribute, or which, by God’s grace, some may diminish; a vast and fertile tradition of ungodliness, of low motives, of low aims, of low desires, of low sense of duty or no sense at all. It is the creation of ages, that tradition; but each age does something for it, and each individual in each age does, if he does not advisedly refuse to do, his share in augmenting it, just as the chimney of every small house does something to thicken and darken the air of London. And this general fund or stock of evil touches us all like the common atmosphere which we breathe, and forms the means of contact between ourselves and what are called, not quite wisely, the criminal classes. And thus it is that when you or I, even in lesser matters, do or say what our conscience condemns, we do really make a contribution to that general fund of wickedness which, in other circumstances and social conditions than ours, produces flagrant crime. Especially if it should happen that we defend what we do, or make light of it, or make a joke of the misdeeds of others, we do most actively and seriously augment this common fund or tradition of wickedness, and thereby incur a grave responsibility for a certain share in those masterpieces of crime which from time to time attract attention. We may have no

traceable connection with this or that criminal; we may persuade ourselves that he is utterly beyond our reach and scope of influence: but the truth is, we have contributed by remote and subtle channels to make him what he is; and if we know the true area of our responsibilities, we ought to feel that his errors and disasters are in some sense our own. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it."

2. A second principle which should govern our thoughts about criminals is, that in the sight of God, the Eternal Justice, all guilt is relative to a man's opportunities. No doubt theft is theft, murder is murder, adultery is adultery, all the world over. But the gravity of the act in itself is one thing; the guilt of the criminal is another. Our Lord insists again and again in His teaching that a man's responsibility for what he does corresponds to his opportunities of knowing what is right. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."¹ "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven" (*i.e.* by the constant presence, teaching, miracles of the Son of Man), "shalt be cast down to hell"² (*i.e.* by thy abuse of these vast opportunities). In the same sense our Lord says simply that to whom much is given, of him much shall be required; and that the servant who has had few opportunities will be beaten with few stripes.³ This doctrine of the relativity of guilt to opportunities at once approves itself to the natural sense of justice which God has implanted in us; and it would scarcely, as far as theory goes, be a matter of controversy. But in practice how entirely do we forget, or, rather, how energetically do we ignore it. We think of the poor man who has been denied the education which we have enjoyed, who has never had the friends, the sympathies, the encouragements,

¹ St. Matt. xi. 21.

² *Ib.* 23.

³ St. Luke xii. 48.

which have cheered us on in the path of duty, as if he had acted from exactly the same moral level of knowledge and responsibility as our own. Whereas, in truth, criminal though he be, and under the ban of the law, he may be far higher in the sight of the Eternal Justice than we; his grave crime may in him mean less unfaithfulness to light and grace than what we deem our little peccadilloes; his tenderness of conscience, his powers of complete recovery may, if we knew the truth, be far less impaired than ours. Oh! if we could bring ourselves seriously to think that we and he are much more nearly on a level than the conventional distinctions of society would permit us to think, how much more should we feel for him in his fall and his crime! "If one member suffer, all the members would suffer with it."

3. Akin to this consideration is a third, which a Christian will keep in mind when he hears of criminal cases. It is the deep, sincere conviction of his own real condition before the Eye of God. That which was so offensive to our Lord in the Pharisees, and which He rebuked so severely and so often, was the substitution of a conventional and outward test of religious excellence for an internal and true one. They did their works that they might be seen of men; they loved to pray in public; they were careful about tithe, anise, and cummin, and neglectful of justice and the love of God. Now, this corresponds to much of the religious respectability of our day, which never gets really below the surface of life, nor asks seriously what God is thinking of all that He sees—not merely in the outward life, but within the soul. There is something of the Pharisee in most of us—there is certain to be, unless we are on the look out. When a Christian has learnt something real and accurate about himself, he has no heart to be hard upon others. He sees that, as far as he is concerned, the Bible account of man's

disposition to evil is true. Regenerate though he be, there is the old leaven of corruption remaining; he knows that there is in him a great capacity for evil, which is kept in check only by the grace of God and by the influences which surround him. With David he exclaims: "I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me: lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward parts. . . . Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."¹ With St. Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am: His grace, which was showed upon me, was not in vain."² "I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all longsuffering."³ With St. Augustine: "If it were not for Divine grace, I should have been the worst of criminals." Surely when this language is sincere, it is impossible for the man who uses it to refer to the conclusion of a criminal case by observing that he is glad that "society is rid of one more rascal." The difference, he feels, between himself and that prisoner is perhaps, after all, an outward rather than an inward one: 'In my circumstances,' he says, 'that man would have been as good, or possibly better, than I: in his I should have been where he is.' Such a judgment may not be quite accurate; but it will be natural to a soul which sees God's Awful Purity, and which has done with the merely conventional and fictitious types of goodness which are current in the world. The man who knows something of his own heart will not suppose that the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, were sinners above all Galilæans; or that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were exceptionally wicked.⁴ He knows that he has too much in common with them to feel that; he knows that he deserves what they have

¹ Ps. cxliii. 2.² 1 Cor. xv. 10.³ 1 Tim. i. 16.⁴ St. Luke xiii. 1-4.

experienced, although, for other reasons, it may be; and therefore if they suffer, he suffers with them, if only from the sensitive activity of his sense of justice.

Your argument, it may be said, goes to deny the right of society to protect itself by criminal law. No, my brethren, I admit that right; it is founded upon a moral, nay, upon a Divine basis. But the question is, how are we to look at the sufferers? ‘*Salus populi suprema lex,*’ no doubt; society must protect itself. But society is protecting itself against her own children, after all; she is, within certain limits, responsible for the crimes which tend to break her up. Let her punish crime; but let her not attempt to deny her share of responsibility. If one member suffers, let all, according to their measure, suffer with him.

III.

What have been, what ought to be, the effects of this, the Christian way of looking at crime?

1. It has softened the penalties of criminal law. The English criminal law was not long since a very stern one; sheep-stealing, like murder, was punishable with death, and the old barbarous treason law of Edward III. was in full force. It may be thought that the relaxation of severity is due to political as distinct from religious influences; but the inspiring force of many a political or social reform has been, as in this case, an unavowed religious conviction or feeling slowly acting upon the public conscience, and so influencing the practical action of the country, of the legislature. As men have felt that society is partly responsible for her criminals, there has been an unwillingness to treat the mere producer of the criminal act with unshared severity. The conscience of society stayed its hand by the whisper, “Who art thou that judgest another?”

2. A second consequence of this way of considering crime is—constant efforts to prevent it—to dry up its springs—to cut out its roots. The conscience of serious Christians is uneasy at it; such crime reflects upon themselves. Hence schools, reformatories, penitentiaries—all the machinery and apparatus of Christian charity. These works are not quixotic enterprises which might be dispensed with; they represent the effort of Christian consciences to diminish ever so slightly the weight of a great common responsibility for crime; they issue from the acuteness of a suffering which is felt by all sound members of the Holy Body when one member suffers.

3. Thirdly, such a way of looking at crime and criminals furnishes a very powerful stimulant to efforts at living nearer to God ourselves. If we cannot influence legislation, if we cannot found charitable institutions, for the Christian education of the poor or the restoration of criminals, we can all do something within our own souls for the same great end. Every little tells, however little it be. Every life, however insignificant, has its sure and certain influence upon the sum-total of opinion and feeling around us, and helps to purify or to corrupt the atmosphere which we all breathe. Here is a field in which, with God's grace to help us, we all may labour with success; and if anything can cheer us, as we journey along the road of life, amid the difficulties which beset us, and under the pressure of our solemn, awful, inalienable responsibility—if anything, I say, can cheer us on, besides the sense of His approval Who has, as the Good Shepherd of to-day's Gospel, bought us with His Blood, and Whose Face we hope to behold for ever in heaven, it will surely be the prospect of thus benefiting, however indirectly or slightly, our brethren of the great human family, our brethren in Christ.

Filey & Gushkiupe 2nd November 1902. Copy kept.

SERMON IX.

INTELLIGENT PRAYER.¹

I COR. xiv. 15.

I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.

TO understand this saying of St. Paul's, we must recall to our recollections those supernatural gifts which were bestowed in such abundance on the first members of the Church of Corinth. Among them, two were especially remarkable, and gave rise to some troublesome controversies which St. Paul had to settle. These were the gift of prophecy, and the gift of tongues. The gift of prophecy was not merely or chiefly the power of predicting future events. "He that prophesieth," says the Apostle, "speaketh unto men, to edification, and exhortation and comfort." No doubt it included the power upon occasions of foretelling future events; but it was a great deal besides; it was the general power of influencing other men for good by the use of inspired language. And the gift of tongues was not always or usually the power of employing a foreign language which had never been learnt by the speaker. This particular power was indeed exercised by the Apostles, certainly on the Day of Pentecost, and probably on many subsequent occasions; but the gift of "tongues" in the Church of Corinth was apparently a mystical language, intelligible only to the utterer and to God. "He that speaketh in a tongue, edifieth himself;"

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, August 19, 1877.

“he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth him; howbeit, in the spirit, he speaketh mysteries.”

Now, there was a great controversy in the Church of Corinth as to which of these two gifts was to be thought most highly of. Each gift had its advocates; and no doubt the advocacy was sharpened in either case by the force of personal considerations. The friends of a Christian who could utter inspired speech with great effect as possessing the gift of prophecy, thought little of another Christian who could only utter what he had to say in terms which were unintelligible to the world at large. And the admirers of a holy man who could hold constant converse with God in inspired and mystical language, had their own opinion of the comparatively humble and undistinguished gift of addressing congregations in their mother-tongue with useful but not extraordinary results.

St. Paul decides the controversy by pronouncing in favour of the gift of prophecy. “I would that ye all spake with tongues; but rather that ye prophesied; for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues.” Again, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all; yet in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” And his concluding advice is that the Corinthians should “covet to prophesy,” but merely “forbid not to speak with tongues.”

The reasons for this decision are very instructive—more instructive than the decision itself, which has ceased to have any very direct practical application in these later ages of the Church. The gift of prophecy is in St. Paul’s eyes the higher gift, because it is the more useful to members of the Church at large. “He that speaketh

in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the Church." The effect of the two gifts is contrasted most completely by the Apostle as follows: "If the whole Church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." The gift of tongues was of great interest and value to the soul endowed with it; but, as a rule, it did nothing for others, unless indeed it was accompanied by another supplementary gift of interpretation. St. Paul himself asks: "Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" He points out that musical instruments and military signals are useless, unless there is "a distinction in the sounds;" and then adds, "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air." "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian or foreigner, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian, unto me." And thus he concludes, "Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret;" and generally he advised the Corinthians, "forasmuch as they are zealous of spiritual gifts," to neglect the more showy and attractive endowments, and "seek that they may excel to the edifying of the Church."

St. Paul's principle in deciding upon the relative merits of these two gifts would be called nowadays "religious

utilitarianism." We shrink from a word like this in such a connection, but it accurately expresses the facts of the case. Prophecy was a useful gift to the Church at large; the gift of tongues was comparatively useless. That was the ground of St. Paul's decision; and his decision is not at all inconsistent with that other rule of his, "Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."¹ The glory of God, in this matter, is best promoted by securing the improvement and edification of men. "God has united," says St. Augustine, "His own glory with man's greatest advantage." Accordingly, in the Apostle's estimate, spiritual gifts take rank according to their capacity for bringing men near to God. And on this ground prophecy is ruled to have precedence of the gift of tongues.

Here let us for a moment pause to observe that we have a principle which should govern our judgments in a great many matters which are frequently under discussion. The real question is, not what is most brilliant and attractive; but what is, spiritually speaking, most useful, most edifying. We admire this book which everybody is talking of; but that simple manual which we have known from childhood brings us closer to the realities of conscience and of God. We are delighted with some splendid and intricate musical service; but those simple chants and hymns in which we can join do really make Divine worship much more easy and genuine. We are impressed by the conversation of some man of great ability and reputation; but somehow a quiet prosaic person, whom we have known for years, does us more real good, makes us feel less satisfied with ourselves, and more anxious to be at peace with God. It is the old question between the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy. We know how St. Paul decided: how do we?

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

1.

Now, St. Paul's language about prayer is to be explained by what he has been saying about these two gifts of tongues and prophecy. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." In the word "spirit" he glances at the gift of tongues; in "understanding," at the gift of prophecy. The gift of tongues was a spiritual impulse, conferring, no doubt, great happiness, great sense of power and expression, upon the soul which possessed it, but seemingly unaccompanied by very distinct ideas, or at any rate by any power of distinctly conveying them. Prophecy, on the other hand, was nothing if it was not active, or rather aggressive, intelligence; prophecy was spiritual understanding in full play upon the soul of others. We know what a difference there is between feeling strongly on a subject and having that command of it which enables us to instruct or convince others with respect to it. The gift of tongues was highly spiritualized feeling, taking unusual forms of expressing itself; prophecy was highly spiritualized thought, devoting itself to the instruction of others; but this distinction was not so sharp and exclusive as to deprive the first of every element of intelligence, or the second of every element of emotion. In the text St. Paul implies that prayer, to be good, must combine that which is essential in both gifts—the warmth of the one and the light of the other; but he lays a stress, which we can hardly miss, upon the last, "I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the understanding also."

"I will pray with the spirit." Observe the order of the elements of prayer. St. Paul does not say, "I will pray with the understanding, and I will pray with the spirit also." That would have been a common modern way of

putting it: 'First let us have intelligence, then spirituality, if it is to be had.' St. Paul does say, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also." The first ingredient in prayer is, not intelligence, but movement of the spirit—of the soul. The raw material of prayer, so to put it, is a vague aspiration of the soul towards its true Object.

"Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks,
So longeth my soul after Thee, O God.
My soul is athirst for God;
Yea, even for the living God.
When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"¹

The motive of this movement is a sense of need, a sense of weakness, a sense of dependence. It is perfectly compatible with very shadowy perceptions of God; it is the cry of a child towards its parent, whom it sees only indistinctly in the distance or in the twilight; it is an impulse, an enthusiasm, an emotion; it is, as I have said, a breathing, an aspiration. The raw material of prayer is not its intellectual element; it is its element of impulse, of love, of moral movement; vigorous and resolute in its endeavour, yet vague and undeterminate as to its course and its Object. Undoubtedly very earnest prayer is often compatible with a slight exercise of the understanding. "I will pray with the spirit" is a resolution which can be carried into practice, if it stands alone, more easily than "I will pray with the understanding," if *it* stands alone. The understanding alone does not pray,—it only thinks; and thought is a very different thing from prayer. Thought about God or about ourselves is not of itself that inward movement towards God which is at bottom an impulse from on high, and which is the first and essential step in real prayer. The uninstructed, the young, the very ill, the almost despairing, the broken-

¹ Ps. xlii. 1, 2.

hearted, can say, after the Apostle, when they can say little else, "I will pray with the spirit."

But then he adds, "I will pray with the understanding also." Although the understanding cannot give the first impulse to prayer, it can supply guidance to it. It is very needful, if the original impulse, which is the essence of prayer, is to be brought into shape and made permanently serviceable to the soul. The original energy of prayer is supplied by emotion; its regulation is secured by the understanding, that is the understanding illuminated by Divine grace. Without this understanding, the spirit of prayer is like fluid metal which runs into irregular forms from want of a mould. Without the understanding, the spirit of prayer is like great natural ability which is wasted or misused from want of good training. Without the understanding, devotional impulse will easily pass into boisterous and even irreverent rhapsody, or shrink back to the lifeless monotony of mere form. The understanding takes the devotional impulse, or spirit, in hand; rouses it to jealous and vigorous consciousness; bids it consider Who He is Who is the real Object of prayer; what is sought of Him; why He is applied to for this particular benefit; what are the fitting steps in the application.

The understanding thus secures a double result. It introduces point, purpose, order, into what, without it, would be aimless and unregulated impulse; and it does more—it secures reverence. Without injuring the tenderness of the relations which bind a living soul to its God and its Redeemer, it is there as a perpetual reminder of His Unapproachable Majesty, and of the nothingness of all creatures before Him. Nowhere, perhaps, in the Church services do we feel the action of the understanding keeping in check the forward impulsive tendencies of devotion, more than in the Collect for this very week, when we address God as a Being Who ~~knows~~

is more ready to hear than we to pray.

our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking ; and ask Him to grant, for His Son's sake, those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot, ask.

II.

Here, then, we may see one way to one or two conclusions of importance.

I. It can hardly be doubted that the Apostle who placed the gift of prophecy higher than the gift of tongues, and who insisted that prayer must be intelligent as well as devout, would have advised the Church of Christ to offer its public prayers to God in the mother tongue of each nation within its fold.

Before the Reformation, as you know, the public prayers of the Church were either altogether, or for the most part, in Latin. In the early ages of the Church, when Latin was spoken throughout the Roman Empire, and was a living language, this was a very natural arrangement, at any rate in these Western countries. But as time went on, and the old Roman empire fell to pieces, the people ceased to speak Latin ; they spoke the language of the races which had overthrown the empire. Thus it came to pass that the language of the Church services was no longer the language of the people ; although, undoubtedly, in the Southern countries of Europe the difference between the two was much less considerable than in England and Germany, where the national language, instead of being formed out of the Latin, as in France and Italy, comes from quite a different stock.

We can well understand that, when the change was made, three hundred years ago, many good people were unwilling to give up the old Latin. They themselves had been accustomed to it from their earliest years in

every parish church in England ; and it had been used in England since England was Christian. On this very spot (in the two Cathedrals which preceded this), as we cannot but remember, it had already been used for nine hundred years continuously, before the change was made ; and those who loved what they were accustomed to might have pleaded with great reason that Latin, if any language, is the language of devotion. Its terseness, its resource, its majesty, make Latin prayers welcome to any man who knows the language well—as was the case with the whole educated class at the time of the Reformation.

But the people at large—the women, the children, the poor—what of them? They had a first right to consideration: “to the poor the Gospel is preached,” was to be a sign of the Kingdom of the Redemption. To the poor, Latin was a dead language. The sounds might be familiar, but they were chiefly familiar as sounds. They were not the veils of thoughts, the channels of ideas, of living energetic convictions. Of course, when the people came to church they knew, in a general way, what was going on. Of devotion, of tender apprehension of a Majestic Presence, which they sought and found, they had—if the truth is to be spoken—often far more than we of these later ages. They prayed with the spirit ; but, then, how about the understanding? They could not enter into the words, the sentences of the public Church language ; they could only associate themselves devoutly with its general drift and purport. They knew that something infinitely good and holy was going forward ; but beyond this there was indistinctness. They could and did pray with the spirit ; but it was the object of the change made at the Reformation to enable them to pray with the understanding also.

It is not possible to doubt that this change was of great value. It was a real return to the mind and

teaching of the Apostles. It was a reassertion for the understanding of its rights and duties during public prayer, side by side with those of devotion of the spirit. It reinforced the ardour of devotion by the activity of intelligence. The Latin language was like the tongues of Corinth—magnificent; but, too generally, unintelligible. And when she translated the old Latin services, which she had used for centuries, into the Common Prayer-book of our day, the Church of England said with the Apostle: “As heretofore, let me pray with the spirit; but I and my children will endeavour to pray with the understanding also.”

2. Here, too, we may see the value of a fixed Order of public prayer. A fixed Order of Divine service is a guarantee of the rights of the understanding—as against the eccentricities of unregulated spirit or enthusiasm, or ill-considered petitions.

Undoubtedly, mental prayer—prayer without words; prayer prompted at the moment, and seizing any words that come to hand—has a lawful, or rather necessary, place in the life of the individual Christian. While private prayer must always have certain fixed elements—acts of faith, hope, charity, repentance; the Creed, the Lord's Prayer; petitions for protection, for guidance, for perseverance; intercessions for those who have a claim on us, and self-surrender to the Divine Will—fixed features of private prayer these, no one of which can be omitted without serious loss to the soul—it may also well have a variable element, the nature and extent of which will be determined by the needs and temper of the individual. There are many things which every soul can only say to God in its own words; many things which will not go into words, but can be prayed notwithstanding: “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercessions

for us in groanings which cannot be uttered. And He Who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.”¹ The best servants of Christ in all generations have devoted time and effort to the cultivation of this unspoken, unwritten, mental prayer; and those silent hours of intercourse between their souls and the Father of spirits have done much to make the greatest of them what they were.

But the introduction of extempore prayer into common or public worship is a very different matter. Not to dwell on the fact that it was unknown to the Ancient Church of Christ,—it is, I believe, fatal in not a few cases to praying with the understanding—which is not, perhaps, the risk which would be generally attributed to it. In the first place, this kind of prayer is apt to become merely rhapsody, when feeling outruns thought very rapidly, and the necessity of saying something to God is more strongly felt than the necessity of considering what is said to Him. In the next place, in joining in an extempore prayer uttered by another, we put ourselves, to a very undesirable degree, into his hands. The case is very different from that of a sermon, since here we are only listeners, and if there may be statements which, rightly or wrongly, we are unable to follow, no great harm is done. But common prayer is a united address to God; and to maintain a reserved or defiant attitude of mind, while all around us are speaking to Him, is very damaging to us and to them, and very dishonouring to Him. Yet how is it always to be avoided in extempore prayer? The congregation does not know what is coming, perhaps the minister himself does not know. There are many petitions about which there can be no question among Christians; but there are also petitions, addressed to God in prayers like these, about which there is room for a

¹ Rom. viii. 26, 27.

great deal of question. And a long extempore prayer is apt to cover a great deal of ground, some of it very debatable ground. It follows, naturally enough, the paths which are traced by the feelings, interests, convictions of the person who offers it; it wanders from the region of purely spiritual into the regions of contemporary human society, or conduct, or politics—there is much to be prayed about in all of these. Thus it sometimes will assume the shape and proportions of a long argumentative dissertation, I had almost said of a leading article in a first-class newspaper, with the unusual characteristic of being thrown into the form of petition, and being addressed to the Almighty. Such a prayer naturally contains many statements, as to the accuracy or advisability of which we may very well have failed to make up our minds; but before we have time to think, these statements are upon us, challenging not merely our assent but our willingness to second them in the presence of the All-wise. The alternative is to cease to pray, to separate ourselves from the company of souls gathered in the house of prayer, or else to pray with the spirit, without the understanding; to join vaguely in a devotional movement going forward, around us, without stopping to think what it is precisely that we ask or wherefore we ask it. From these embarrassments we are saved by the public formularies of the Church. They are in the hands of everybody; we have ample opportunities of considering their exact drift before we use them. They are no new experiment in devotion; most of the Collects have been in use for fourteen centuries at the least. We, as we join in them, associate ourselves with multitudes of souls who live far from us, both in the present and in the past; and this tried and familiar language, warranted by the experience of believing Christendom, may assuredly be trusted. When we hear it in church, we have not to consider for the first

time whether we can agree with it; our duty is simply to throw into it all the determination we possibly can. It does the fullest justice to the warmth and movement of the spirit, but it also provides for the requirements of the understanding. In using it we know what we are about; we have our thoughts and feelings well under control; we pray with the spirit, but we pray with the understanding also.

3. Lastly, we see here the importance of preparation for prayer, especially for those most solemn and effectual of all acts of prayer, which are associated with the Holy Communion. The precept, "Keep thy feet when thou goest to the house of God,"¹ is always urgent. Certainly the first essential is that affection and will should be roused; but, this done, the understanding as the regulator of prayer must be in good order, unless, indeed, we are to waste our time in the Divine Presence, or to do something worse than waste it. As we grow older, the understanding should have more and more to do in the regulation of devotional impulse—of prayer. As the years fly by, and the horizons of thought continually expand, the material and scene of prayer is, or should be, always enlarging. As we pass on the road of life, we may well hear the echoes of the Apostolic warning, "Brethren, be not children in understanding, but in understanding be men."² A man's religious life must keep pace with the growth of his knowledge and powers of reflection; or he will learn to think of it as a thing divided from all practical interests, as a mere reminiscence of his childhood; he will gradually drop if he does not deliberately reject it. A man's prayers must prompt and accompany his most deliberate actions; they must, if it may be, keep abreast of the entire range of his mental and moral effort. New subjects will constantly crowd for recognition; new forms of occupation,

¹ Eccles. vi. 1.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

new friendships, new materials for thought and speculation, new difficulties, anxieties, trials; new hopes and fears; the varying fortunes of our families; the course of public events; the conduct of our rulers; the failures or triumphs of the Church; the constant departure—one after another—of those whom we have known and loved, to another world, and the sense, which each day that passes must deepen, that our own turn must come ere long;—all this is material for prayer, which is constantly accumulating, and which the understanding must sort, arrange, and digest before bringing it into the presence of the All-holy. The understanding will have more than enough to do without encroaching on the province of spirit; but its task will only be worthily achieved, if it is made a subject of forethought and deliberation, in the hours which can be snatched from toil or from rest.

Brethren, at such a time as this there is material enough for prayer ready to the hand of any man who sincerely believes in the power of prayer. Not to mention the struggles and sufferings of our Christian brethren in Eastern Europe; or the many subjects nearer home which have a claim on our sympathies, let me remind you that some millions of our fellow-subjects in India are threatened with nothing short of extermination, by a famine much more terrible and devastating than any of which we have had experience since India has been ours. Already we are told by the Sanitary Commissioner in Madras that a million and a half of people are under relief, and that half a million have already perished. Think for one moment what that means. There seems no reason to question these dreadful facts; and it is certain that the evil is on a scale which the resources of the Indian Government are quite unable to grapple with. Let us Christians pray for the sufferers, believing as we do that prayer will really help them; but let us do more. The

Lord Mayor has opened a fund for their relief at the Mansion House, and he invites all Englishmen, but particularly the citizens of London, to contribute what they can possibly afford to an object which has every claim upon us as men and as Christians. Let us, during the coming week, do what we can out of our abundance or our poverty to assist this generous effort; let us remember that to pray sincerely with the understanding is also to attempt all that lies in our power towards furthering the object of our prayer.

SERMON X.

THE MEANING OF CHURCH LIFE ON EARTH :

PREPARATION FOR AN ETERNAL FUTURE.¹

1 COR. XV. 19.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

ON a day like the present, when your Parish Church has been repaired and restored to the Public Service of God, it is natural to ask yourselves, what is the most fundamental idea which this building represents? Why is it here? Why in a city where every inch of ground is so valuable is this large area covered with a building, devoted to no one of the usual interests of life? Why, in an age when, at least among so many classes of the population, time is of such exceeding value for business, for study, for purposes of improvement, or purposes of benevolence, should men and women meet at regular intervals in a structure of a particular shape and character, and listen to addresses always upon one class of subjects, and join in language—addressed to a Being Who is characterized in a great variety of ways, but Who is throughout invisible? To a complete stranger to our habits, our civilization, as we term it, this question would appear to require an answer; and we are likely to be none the worse for asking it of ourselves, and so making an occasion like the present useful for coming face to face with one or more of our deepest convictions.

And if we are to attempt this, we can hardly do better

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, which was re-opened for service after restoration, on the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, June 23, 1872.

this afternoon than place ourselves under the guidance of that great Apostle to whom this Church is dedicated, and whose ministry, in what to him would be a foreign land, and after a lapse of eighteen centuries, it is meant to continue. If St. Paul were among us now, there are, we may believe, few sites, even in London, in which he would have found himself more at home than here—close to a great industrial centre, where men and women converge from all parts of this vast metropolis, and where, as in the ancient cities of the Levant, trade with its attractions may prove a useful handmaid, now as of old, to the efforts of faith. What the place where prayer was wont to be made was at Philippi, what the school of Tyrannus was at Ephesus, what for a short while Mars Hill was, or promised to become, at Athens, and the house of Jason at Corinth,—that is this church now, in interest of the same faith, associated for ever with the work of the same Apostle. It is devoted to the propagation, to the teaching, and to the worship of the Christian Church. And here the question arises,—What in the Apostle's view was the main purpose, the fundamental idea of the religion which he preached with such perseverance and fervour, and for which, in the end, he laid down his life?

1. Can we answer this question by saying that the main purpose of Christianity is to make men better: that Christian belief, Christian observances, Christian studies, Christian interests of all kinds, are meant to make Christians more like Jesus Christ: that Christianity is nothing if it is not the elevation of character, the purification of motive, the quickening of energy, the increased vitality of conscience, the subjection of the passions to the will, and of the will to its legitimate Ruler, God? Certainly we may say that this is an immediate and main purpose of Christianity. Our Lord's teaching was chiefly concerned with questions of conduct. The Sermon on the

Mount is an elaborate contrast between a true and a false code of conduct: the Beatitudes imply that the project of making men better is in the very forefront of our Lord's teaching; and when we turn to the Apostolic Epistles everything is in harmony with this. In the most doctrinal of St. Paul's Epistles, such as those to the Romans and the Galatians, there is at the close a series of exhortations, of the most practical, importunate, and detailed description, addressed to persons in very various circumstances of life; putting before them their real duties and their most pressing dangers—and, in short, treating conduct as a most serious and absorbing subject, to which a Christian, as such, is bound to give his first and best attention.

“Be ye therefore perfect,” says our Lord, “even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect.”¹ And His Apostle says that Christ came to bless men “in turning every one of them from his iniquities,”² and “to purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;”³ and, accordingly, Christians are desired to “avoid even the appearance of evil,”⁴ and are reminded that “without holiness no man will see the Lord.”⁵ And, indeed, there is no great necessity for insisting at length upon this. The New Testament is incontestably decisive in what it prescribes about the Christian life, and in the picture it gives us of the life of the earliest Christians. “All they that believed were of one heart and one soul, and they had all things common.” “They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”⁶ It is bracing and humbling to read such pictures of the Christian life as those which are given us by Tertullian, who represents the state of things at the end of the second century of our era. In writing a public Apology for Christianity, he could venture to appeal to facts which

¹ St. Matt. v. 48.

² Acts iii. 26.

³ Tit. ii. 14.

⁴ 1 Thess. v. 22.

⁵ Heb. xii. 14.

⁶ Acts ii. 44, 42.

at least show that in the early ages of the Church the practical side of Christianity was not undervalued.

“We Christians do good,” he observes, “without respect of persons. We look for our recompense, not at the hands of men, of whose gratitude and approval we make small account, but at the hands of God, Who has prescribed this universal love to us as a duty. We are forbidden equally all acts and words that may hurt a fellow-creature; nay, the desire, the very thought of evil. Whom could we hate, if it is enjoined upon us to love our enemies? If we are forbidden to avenge ourselves on those who injure us, that we may not render ourselves as guilty as they, whom can we injure? You yourselves may decide. How often do you heathen rage against the Christians, from your own impulse, or in obedience to (persecuting) laws! How often, without waiting for orders, and without any justification but its irrational passion, does a hostile mob greet us with stones and set fire to our dwellings! In these times of furious excitement, the very dead are not spared; torn from the graves in which they rest—that sacred asylum of death—unrecognizable, mutilated, their corpses are outraged, rent limb from limb; the relics are dispersed. But have we ever been known to use reprisals against this implacable hatred which thus pursues us even beyond the gate of death? A single night and a few torches in our hands might afford us the opportunity for an ample vengeance; but may God forbid that a religion which comes from Him should endeavour to avenge itself by human means, or should be depressed at being purified through suffering.”

Who can but feel the intensity of passion in conflict with the sternest and most chastened sense of duty which breathes through this language? Tertullian proceeds to characterize the Christian life under other aspects towards the pagan civilization of the time. In quiet

times his words would be, perhaps, Pharisaical; but there are crises when men must risk misunderstanding and criticism, on the score of apparent egotism, in the interests of truth and justice. He proceeds as follows:—

“Indifferent as we are to glory and to distinctions, your public assemblies have no attractions for us. We avoid your games on account of their superstitious origin. We have nothing in common with the wastefulness of the circus, with the immodesty of the theatre, with the barbarous scenes of the arena, with the frivolity of the gymnasiums. Of ourselves we form a single body, united by the bonds of one faith, of one discipline, of one hope. We meet together, in some sense, to importune God with our prayers. God likes to suffer this violence; and we pray for the emperors, for their ministers, for all who are in authority, for the present state of the world, for peace, for delay of the Day of Judgment. We meet to read the Holy Scriptures, in which, as circumstances suggest, we find the very guidance and warning that we want. This Divine Word nourishes our faith, raises our hope, strengthens our confidence, tightens the bonds of discipline, by its inculcation of precept. . . . Men advanced in years preside. They attain to this distinction, not by buying it, but by the recognition which is awarded to tried excellence. Money has no weight in the things of God. If we have among us a kind of treasure, it comes from a pure source; we have not to blush for having sold religion. Each makes his contribution every month, or when he likes, and if he likes, and if he can afford it. No one is forced to give; all is voluntary. It forms a kind of fund of piety; it is not spent in feasts or debaucheries. It is used for the purposes of comforting and burying the poor, of feeding destitute orphans, and servants who are unable to work from extreme old age, and shipwrecked

sailors ; and if there are any Christians condemned to work in the mines, shut up in prison, or banished to distant islands, only for their loyalty to the cause of God, Religion enlarges her motherly care in favour of those who have confessed her.”¹

It might perhaps be thought that what Christians said about themselves in early times was one thing, but the heathen opinion about them quite another. And undoubtedly there were all kinds of foolish scandals about the Christians current in heathen society, sometimes wilfully invented by their enemies, and often believed and circulated in good faith by ignorant but prejudiced persons. Thus it was said that the Christians met in private for bad purposes ; that they ate the flesh of little children ; that they were disaffected to the government ; that they were in some way or other at the bottom of all public calamities. Still, at times, a glimpse of the real effect of Christianity upon the conduct and lives of Christians appears to have been caught sight of by persons who had opportunities of forming an opinion. To take a single instance. We have an authentic account of the trial of Afra, who in the year 304 was burnt alive at Augsburg during the persecution of Diocletian. Afra, before her conversion, had led a bad life ; and Gaius, the Roman judge who tried and condemned her, had been made aware of this. “Sacrifice to the gods,” said he ; “it is better for you to live than to die in torture.” “Before I knew God,” said Afra, “I was a great sinner ; but I will not add any new crimes to those which it is my misery to have committed heretofore, as I should do in doing what you require.” Said Gaius, “Go to the temple, and sacrifice.” Afra replied, “Jesus Christ is my God ; I have Him ever before my eyes. Continually do I confess my sins to Him ; and because I am all unworthy

¹ Tertullian, “Apology,” c. xxxvi.—xxxix.

to offer Him any sacrifice, . . . I desire to offer myself for the glory of His Name, that this body, which has been so often defiled by sin, may be purified through suffering." "I know," replied Gaius, "that you are a woman of bad character. You had better sacrifice, then, for you cannot possibly pretend to the friendship of Him Who is the God of the Christians." Afra replied, "Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that He came down from heaven to save sinners. The Gospel records that He allowed one who lived such a life as mine has been, to wash His feet with her tears, and that He forgave her her sins. So far was He from rejecting sinners, that He conversed familiarly with them, and ate with them." "Sacrifice," cried Gaius, "that you may yet be enriched by a life of pleasure." "I have for ever," said Afra, "taken leave of such wealth as that. I have despoiled myself of all that I gained in such a way. But the very poorest of our brethren would not touch such ill-gotten money, although, when I offered it, I told them that I gave it them that they might pray for me to God." - Gaius replied, "Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with you. It is useless for you to treat Him as your God; such an one as you can never be called a Christian." "It is too true," said Afra, "that I do not deserve to bear the Christian name; but Jesus Christ has had pity upon me, and has admitted me into the number of those who believe on Him." Then came the end.¹

In such a conversation as this we see the real power of the religion of Christ, and the kind of idea about it which the best-informed heathen had. Gaius knew enough to know that the God of the Christians was All-holy. He did not know enough to understand that He is also All-merciful. But at least he understood that the general effect of Christianity was to promote virtues which were almost unknown among the heathens, and that for a

¹ See "Acta Sanctorum;" August, vol. ii. pp. 39-59.

Christian to fall short of this was to be untrue to the distinctive marks of his religion.

It is impossible, therefore, to say accurately that early Christianity was so occupied with doctrinal questions as to be insensible to the great work of teaching men to lead better lives. In point of fact, they learnt to lead better lives because they were so deeply and genuinely interested in Christian doctrines; because they believed in those doctrines, not as passing speculations about the unintelligible, but as facts resting on God's authority, as doctrines eternally, absolutely true.

Now, of the doctrines which most powerfully influenced Christians, as such, to lead good lives there were three leading ones. The first, the love of Jesus Christ Who died for sinners "that," as St. Paul says, "they should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again."¹ This doctrine appeals to the sense of obligation and of gratitude; to the feeling which would prevent all but very hard and bad men from vexing and paining One Who had done them a great and inappreciable kindness.

The second doctrine which influenced early Christians to lead good lives was the belief that by the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism they were really made members of Christ and children of God, and that this union with Him was confirmed by the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. The early Christians reasoned, with St. Paul, that they were not simply their own; that they belonged to Another, as being, in a mysterious but most real way, one with Him; that the faculties of their minds and the members of their bodies were His; and that they could only think, or say, or do what was wrong, not merely at His expense, but with instruments which were His, not theirs. "Shall I then take the members of Christ," says

¹ 2 Cor. v. 15.

St. Paul, "and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid."¹

But the third doctrine, which influenced them most powerfully, was their belief in a future life. The heathens had a dim shadowy notion of a world of spirits which was the home of the dead. The Penates, or little images which were part of the furniture of an old Roman household, probably represented deceased ancestors of the family, with whom their descendants thus wished to maintain a kind of indefinable connection. The mass of the Roman people no doubt believed in a world of spirits; but towards the latter years of the Republic, the old faith, such as it was, had died away. Mæcenas, the friend and minister of Augustus, the patron of art and letters, the leader of cultivated Roman society in his day—the site of whose beautiful villa is well known to any visitor to Tivoli—Mæcenas "shuddered at the prospect of death, and welcomed any suffering if he were only left with the boon of existence." It was not that death meant annihilation, certainly; Mæcenas was too thoughtful to suppose that. The question was what it did mean; the distress was occasioned by the uncertainty which surrounded it. What if something, some ghost or extract of former life, did survive; some thin, cold shade, stripped of all the vigour and warmth of an embodied existence, living only on the memories of an irrevocable past, or haunting the scenes which were associated with its impotent regrets? Mæcenas, like other eminent and respectable heathens, ancient and modern, was a living illustration of that mournful but energetic expression of the Apostle's, in which he speaks of those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."²

No doubt it was in order to escape from a future life as sketched by the imagination—the life of a cold

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 15.

² Heb. ii. 15.

ghost on a lonely shore—that the Epicurean and other thinkers made a desperate effort to treat the presentiment of a future which is part of the original furniture of the human mind as a sickly and discreditable superstition; to persuade themselves that because nothing certainly was known about what happened after death, therefore nothing did happen; to treat the human spirit as if it were nothing more than a phosphoric scintillation from matter which perished with new modifications of the matter which produced it. But no abstract physical arguments can permanently silence the voice of the consciousness of the human spirit. There is that in man—in every man—apart from Revelation, which whispers to him in his better moments that all does not end at death. And thus it may be said with some truth that man feels his immortality; that on this, as on other points, at a certain stage of religious declension, the aberrations of reason are corrected by those irrepressible instincts of the soul which are beyond reason, and which we vaguely describe as feeling. This is, perhaps, what is meant by the poet of the day—

“If e'er, when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, 'Believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

“A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answer'd, 'I have felt.'”¹

And yet feeling varies; it is powerful at one while, weak and fleeting at another. And it cannot be transferred from mind to mind like an argument addressed to the reason; it depends upon individual character; the feeling which is natural and obvious to one man is unintelligible, or perhaps even repulsive, to another.

¹ Tennyson, “In Memoriam,” cxxiv.

Thus it was for Christianity to place man's immortality on a firm basis. Certainly the Jews had believed in a future; the later Jews, and the Pharisees very particularly, believed in a resurrection of the body. But a fact was required which should arrest speculation; a fact sufficiently well-attested to be insisted on against all opponents, in the face of the world. This was supplied by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Upon the truth of that fact everything in Christianity depended. "If Christ be not risen," exclaimed St. Paul, "our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain."¹ St. Paul does not say that 'if the dogma of the Resurrection should have to be given up, the moral teaching of Christianity will still remain, which is after all the matter of real importance.' Why? Because with the Resurrection the certainty of immortality would go too; it might be treated as a high probability, but it would not be counted on like the rising of the sun to-morrow morning. And with this would go one of the very first conditions for acting well. If anything is certain, it is that all human action is most powerfully influenced by the agent's ideas about himself. A man in private life carries about with him a totally different consciousness of what is befitting in him from that of a king or a prime minister; what is adequate and noble in the one case is mean and disappointing in the other. So if we think of ourselves habitually as beings who have certainly before us an endless existence in a future state, we shall act, it is probable, very differently indeed from those who seriously suppose that in dying they take leave of conscious existence altogether; or from those who think that at the best there is only a very good chance of our not doing so. There are, of course, Christians who are inconsistent with their creed, just as kings often enough forget what is part of a kingly bearing; but, given

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 14.

a conviction of the reality of a future life as secured by the Resurrection, and a man will strive—according to his lights, and with such aids as he can secure—to prepare for it.

And thus Christianity makes men better—not by insisting upon the abstract excellence of goodness, but by insisting that we really belong to a much larger stage or scene of action than that which meets the eye of sense; that there is a future life before us; that at the entrance of that life, we must all “appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to give an account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad;”¹ and that our conditions hereafter will correspond to the award then given. This belief in a future, for which we are made ready by the grace and righteousness of Christ our Lord and God, Who died and rose for us, Whose Manhood is the earnest of His perfect sympathy, as His Godhead is the warrant of His Redemptive power, is the fundamental thing in Christianity; it colours it throughout. Everything in this world is dwarfed to a Christian’s apprehension by the view of the next which has opened upon him. As he goes about the streets; as he mixes in society; as he watches the keen contests between men and parties which make up public life; as he reads the daily prints which reflect so vividly, so implacably, the absorbing interests and passions of the passing hour;—he says to himself, with the Apostle, “The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”²

And thus a Christian is led to make a great venture. He gives up the seen for the unseen; this world that he may win the next. He does much that he would not do, he leaves undone much that he would do; because he looks beyond sense and time; because he has a larger horizon than those who do not, and acts accordingly. And if—to put a possible supposition—he is mistaken after

¹ 2 Cor. v. 10.

² *Ib.* iv. 18.

all, if there be no after world, he has made a fatal miscalculation. "If, in fact, in this life only we have grounds for hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." We have staked our all upon Him as having the keys of hell and of death; we have seriously supposed that when He had overcome the sharpness of death, He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. If after all He is only a figure in human history—if He is but one of the fleeting shadows of time, we have made a greater mistake than any adherents of an untrustworthy philosophy which exacts little or nothing in the way of work, sacrifice, practical tests of sincerity, from those who adhere to it. Christianity is the great and serious Religion of the Life to come, of which Islam is a travesty, and Buddhism a sickly shadow; or,—it is without any claims whatever on the heart and intelligence of the world.

And here we seem to reach an answer to the question with which I started, viz. What is the rationale, the use, the justification of the buildings which, in the name of Christ, are placed at intervals, alas! far too wide, amid the population of this great city, and throughout the country? I reply that they are buildings in which human beings are to prepare for another life. Their purposes may be differently described and yet correctly, and men may prepare for that which follows upon death elsewhere. Still this is their great purpose. As they rise, with more or less of beauty, with more or less of obtrusiveness, from among surrounding buildings, they speak a language which we cannot mistake; they say with the Apostle, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Around them all tells of what we see, of what we are, of what we touch; they speak of what we do not see, of what we shall be, of that which is beyond the reach of sense. They are temples of the invisible; they are temples of the future life. Within

these blessed walls the knowledge that is gathered bears, directly or indirectly—all of it—upon another world. Within these walls character is moulded to that type which alone will be happy, could be happy, in another world. Here, too, are learnt habits and occupations which will be the only permissible ones hereafter—without sympathy with which heaven would be hell. The Bible, read constantly here, is, St. Augustine used to say, a volume of “letters from the heavenly country.”¹ The Sacraments administered here provide strength for journeying towards it; prayer and praise offered here are anticipated communications with Him Whom we shall there see, as we humbly hope, face to Face. As we cross the threshold of a church, we should say, “I am now about to engage in duties which have no meaning, if I am only an intelligent, well-dressed, educated animal, if I am not an immortal spirit, who has a vast future before him after death. It is as an undying soul that I am reasonable in thus retiring from ordinary occupations which connect me with this visible world; it is because I dare to look forward, because I cannot but look forward, to an eternal existence of rest and enjoyment, in which I shall live with the Object of my unwearied affections—Jesus.” Yes! Temples of the future life; that is the true theory of the churches of Christendom, that is the true explanation of the care and beauty which is lavished on them, of the frequent attendance at them, of the reverence and devotion which befits us within them. We seek Jesus Christ here at times, that we may hereafter be with Him uninterruptedly. One day we shall look on these buildings, as an oasis in a great desert, where, in the barren drought, shade and pasture were ready to hand; where life was, or might have been, estimated in its true proportions; where what is transient and unsubstantial

¹ Enarr. in Ps. xc. Serm. 2, “De illâ civitate unde peregrinamur, litteræ nobis venerunt: ipsæ sunt Scripturæ.”

was for a short while forgotten, that communion might be held with the unchanging and the real; where all that took place—penitence, intercession, praise, communion, instruction—was one supreme effort, in the words of to-day's beautiful Collect, "so to pass through things temporal, as finally to lose not the things eternal." God grant that that retrospect may be a happy and thankful one, and that while the brief day of life still lasts, we may make the most of our opportunities of preparing for the future, and, as to-day's occasion reminds us, of extending them, as largely as possible, to others.

SERMON XI.

VICTORY OVER THE LAST ENEMY.¹

I COR. XV. 56, 57.

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE subject which occupied us last Sunday afternoon was the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian bondage,² considered as an anticipation of the deliverance of Christians from the bondage of sin and death. The temporal circumstances of God's ancient people Israel in Egypt, foreshadowed the spiritual circumstances of the true Israel of God, gathered out of all nations, before its redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. Pharaoh is an earthly counterpart of the invisible power of evil, who rules in the spheres of sin and death; and Moses, of a greater than any earthly deliverer, Who saves His people from a worse than the Egyptian bondage. The brief time at our disposal made it impossible to pursue the subject into the recesses of its Christian application; and therefore to-day we may do well to take that department of the victory achieved by Jesus Christ to which attention is directed in the text—the victory over death. "Thanks be to God," exclaims the Apostle, "Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

To most Christians, or at any rate to most Church people, who have grown up and have had their average

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Second Sunday after Easter, April 15, 1888.

² See "Sermons on Old Testament Subjects," pp. 19-34.

share of the sorrows of life, these words can scarcely be less familiar than they are solemn. Besides its place among the proper Lessons for Eastertide, the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians is associated with the saddest memories in our lives by its place in the Service for the Burial of the Dead. Men who never give much heed to Holy Scripture at any other time, listen wistfully for some message of hope or encouragement in those dark moments when they are parting with the body of one whom they have perhaps loved best on earth; and in this great discussion on the resurrection of the dead the Apostle comes to their assistance as no uninspired teacher possibly could, with hard arguments for the reason; with boundless vistas of glory and beauty in the world to come, for the imagination; with affectionate appeals that may touch the heart; with plain-speaking remonstrances addressed to the dormant sense of Christian duty. But among the many great sayings with which the passage abounds, none perhaps is more fitted to sink into and take possession of the soul of man than the confident anticipation or rather experience of victory at its close—

“The sting of death is sin;
And the strength of sin is the Law.
But thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ.”

I.

Now, observe, first of all, the estimate of death which is taken for granted in the passage before us. Death is referred to as an enemy who has to be conquered. Indeed, the Apostle had said as much in an earlier verse: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Why, it may be asked, should death be an enemy? May not

death be to many a man a friend—apart from all religious considerations? Is not this life, for thousands of human beings, a scene of anxiety and sorrow, from which escape is welcome? Do not the statistics of suicide go to show that this view is taken by a large and increasing number of human beings, who feel so keenly the miseries of life, that they repress the strong instinct of self-preservation, and even—to quote their own desperate language—dare to chance the awful future in order to escape them?

My brethren, all this is unhappily true; but it does not control and set aside the broad fact that, to the immense majority of human beings, life is dear, and death, as the antagonist and end of life, is regarded as an enemy. This broad fact is not to be overset by the counsels and experiences, whether of abnormal misery or of morbid despair. St. Paul's phrase is the phrase, not merely of the Church, but of humanity; and it may be explained if we consider the effects of death. An enemy is one who, if he can, will spoil and wound us; and death certainly fulfils this description.

1. Thus, first of all, death separates us roughly and suddenly from all the objects and persons around whom our affections have entwined themselves. And this separation is likely to be more felt the longer we live, until, perhaps, the years immediately preceding the close of a very long life. Elderly people—as distinct from the very old, in whom the faculties are benumbed, and who are consciously tottering on the edge of the grave—elderly people do, as a rule, feel more attachment to persons and objects around them than the young; because in the young the affections have not yet had time to grow. A young man, it is true, gives up more of life when he dies voluntarily than an older one; but he can do it generally more easily, because his affections have not bound him, like old ivy, so tightly to the fabric of earthly interests

with which he is in daily contact. Death—we cannot doubt it—inflicts a sharp wound on the life of affection, in proportion to the intensity and fervour of personal character. Think of David and Absalom. Absalom was not only a rebel, he was a frivolous and worthless profligate, and he would have put his father to death without scruple, if he had succeeded in his revolutionary enterprise. To Joab, who looked at the subject independently, who knew what was really at stake, and who with his fellow-soldiers had fought hard for David, David's sorrow for Absalom appeared an exhibition of sentimentalism with which he had no patience. But we who are far removed from the passions of a desperate struggle for power, hear only that cry of anguish in the gate of Mahanaim, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"¹ and as it falls on our ears, after traversing an interval of eight and twenty centuries, we reflect that a power like death, which can so deeply wound the human heart, is in the average judgment of human nature an enemy, even though he should in time be tamed and chained, and known and owned as doing the work of a true Friend.

2. Then, again, looked at from the point of view of human nature, death means an introduction to loneliness and exile. Some one here, perhaps, may remember what it was to go to school, as a young child, for the first time. A father or a mother came with us to the new scene in which we were to spend some years; and so long as they were still at hand, it was possible to forget that we were leaving home. But the time came when they wished us good-bye; and we were alone—alone among strange faces and in a new scene, and with new duties set before us, and new habits to form; alone, but with a memory—

¹ 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

never so keen before—of all that we had left behind, of all whom we had loved, and from whom we now were parted. How many will understand the account of one who went through this, and who tells us, “As soon as I saw that nobody was looking, I slipped away into a bedroom, and burst into tears”? That which proved too much for the nerve and heart of this young boy was the fresh and distressing sense of being alone. And the solitariness of the act of dying was that which most impressed itself upon the mind of the great Pascal: “I shall die,” he said, “alone.” So it must be. Friends may be standing or kneeling round, tending us with every care that natural kindness or religious zeal can suggest; but the actual experience of dying and of that which follows death can be shared by no other, and until we go through it we cannot know or guess what it is exactly like. This only we know, that it means a wrench from all that has hitherto been familiar; it means a plunge into the vast, dark, unknown world.

“Alone! to land alone upon that shore,
 With no one sight that we have seen before:
 Things of a different hue,
 And sounds all strange and new;
 No forms of earth our fancies to arrange,
 But to begin alone that mighty change!”

“Alone! to land alone upon that shore,
 Knowing full well we can return no more;
 No voice or face of friend,
 None with us to attend
 Our disembarking on that awful strand;
 But to arrive alone in such a land!”¹

And thus death seems to human nature like an Assyrian or Babylonian conqueror, hurrying his captives away from their homes and friends into a distant country; while their heart, as Isaiah words it, meditates terror.²

¹ Faber, “The Shore of Eternity.”

² Isa. xxxiii. 18.

As we shall presently see, a Christian has much to sustain him under this anticipation ; but from the point of view of mere nature, death is an enemy, who leads us away from the world which we know and love, into the loneliness of an unimagined and unimaginable exile.

3. Once more, death inflicts a wound—the exact sensations of which we cannot anticipate—upon the composite being which hitherto is that which we have recognized as ourselves. True, when the body is laid aside, and decays in the grave, the immortal spirit survives ; but the spirit is only a part, though it be the most important part, of our complete identity. If death does not destroy man, it at least impairs and mutilates the integrity of his nature. To see without eyes, to hear without ears, to think without the brain, to feel without the sympathetic action of heart and nerves, will be to have entered, for the time being, on a new existence. If we regard it the act of an enemy violently to cut off an arm or a leg, even though he does not destroy life, it is intelligible that human nature should hold death to be an enemy when he achieves so much larger a mutilation of our being ; when he breaks up and destroys the body altogether, although he cannot touch that surviving spiritual essence which is the seat of personal life.

4. But, above all, death has one formidable peculiarity, upon which the Apostle insists, while he passes over those which have been noticed. Death in his eyes is like those reptiles which are armed with a sting. “The sting of death” is that which arrests his attention. What is it ? “The sting of death is sin.”

Sin may be a source of great misery to a healthy man, in whom conscience has not been killed, quite apart from the thought of death. Remorse, as the heathen knew, can even be torture. The wrong which we have done to another, and of which our victim never suspects us ;

the praise which we have received for some work or conduct which, if the truth were known, would be the measure of our discredit; the money which we have made by unfair or dishonourable means; the lie which we told at a moment when it was socially convenient to tell it, and which we have not dared since to own; the secret act which for all the world we would not have others suspect, yet which we cannot forget, since it has left a black stain upon our soul;—some of us, perhaps, know what the sharp pain of a memory like this may mean. And apart from grave violations of God's moral Law, we may be well conscious of a general habit of life which is sinful, in that it is not in accordance with what we know to be God's will. Our waste of time, our waste of money, our purposelessness in what we do with ourselves, our frivolous or ill-natured conversation, our petty and enduring jealousies, our subjection to unworthy prejudices and to feeble irritability; the empires of state of thought and policy which, like a blight or a frost, kill all that is tender and beautiful in a life; the empire of unchaste imaginations, of unresisted sloth, of vague desires for place and promotion, of lazy, unfronted, unverified doubt. We think little of these things, taken separately; but in the aggregate they mean a life which is not in accordance with the Divine Will, and which, in its bent, direction, spirit, physiognomy, is a sinful life. Possibly no monstrous sin has as yet disfigured it—no thoroughly deliberate lie, no successful theft, no flagrant adultery. But its general character is such that we shrink as with a pang from the thought of death. We feel that if God is what we know Him to be, we ought to be radically different from what we are before we die. We contrive to put the whole thing aside, while we are in good health and spirits, for long tracts of time; we even contrive to do so when our health has given way, but we have found

means of giving a new turn to our thoughts. But these periods of preoccupation with the perishable will not last for ever; they come to an end: again we find ourselves face to face with the thought that we are going to die; and again we find that the sting of death—is sin.

What is it which makes this sting so sharp and venomous? What is the strength of sin? "The strength of sin," says St. Paul, "is the Law." This is a point which St. Paul not seldom insists on; the irritation which is produced by the holy and blessed Law of God on man's fallen nature. When man lives in harmony with the Will of God, as he did in his unfallen state, as he does substantially when living the regenerated life in Christ and renewed and led by His Spirit, there is no opposition between God's moral Law and man's nature. But with fallen and unreconciled man it is otherwise; and it is otherwise with Christians who, by wilful sin, have very seriously impaired or forfeited the grace of their regeneration at the Baptismal font. To such the moral Law appears only as an outward rule; an unwelcome restraint upon all that it is natural to desire and to do and to be; a galling yoke, which is inconsistent with the liberty of the passions; a continuous incentive and provocation to resistance. This is true not only of the moral Law of Moses, which St. Paul had more especially in view, but of all law that can rightfully appeal to conscience; law, as such, is a standing provocation to resistance until it is embraced voluntarily as a principle of life, until it expresses the bent and drift of the will. In that great chapter, the eighth of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul teaches us how this perfect harmony between law and human nature is brought about by the guiding and ruling Spirit of Christ; but until this blessed result is achieved, law acts upon our fallen nature as a constant incentive to rebellion, and is thus the strength of sin. Putting himself into the

position of fallen man, St. Paul writes to the Romans, "I had not known sin but by the Law; for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the Law sin was dead. . . . For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."¹

Thus, in a sinful nature, sin is strengthened by the very presence and imperativeness of the Rule of holiness; and this makes it, for numbers of human beings, the sting of death. This sting is extracted when the moral Law has become, through regenerating grace, an inward principle, an instinct not to be distinguished from a man's average desire and will; but until this has been done, or when, through a lapse into wilful evil, it has been undone, the moral Law cannot but be the strength of sin, and the minister of the sharpest pang to the thought and the experience of death.

II.

Death, then, is an enemy—the last enemy; but in the Apostle's view he is already conquered. "Thanks be to God, Which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." How is this victory secured?

I. Now, the first way in which our Lord enables men to conquer death is by dissipating our ignorance about it. Without the Gospel, death and its surroundings are wrapped in mysterious gloom. Two Sundays ago,² indeed, we saw that Reason may attain to a certain conviction that man survives death, by reflecting that if the accepted doctrine of the conservation of force is good for anything, it is as applicable to spiritual as to physical force; and since spiritual force cannot exist apart from a living person

¹ Rom. vii. 7, 8, 11.

² *I.e.* Easter Day, April 1, 1888.

or subject, the conservation of spiritual force means the survival of personal life, which, however, without a resurrection of the body, is an incomplete survival of human identity. The criticisms which some of my hearers have since made to me upon this statement deserve grateful acknowledgment; but they do not appear to impair its substantial truth, and the argument is only referred to now as showing how far Reason—if enterprising and morally well-disposed—can grope its way upwards towards the light. But our Lord throws upon death and all that follows it a much brighter light than any that Reason can thus or in any kindred way supply; He has in very deed brought Life and Immortality to light. And thus, to borrow an illustration from modern warfare, He has enabled us to meet our enemy with all the advantages that are supplied by what is called an ‘Intelligence department.’ We know how, in the last great European war, eighteen years ago, the provision of a body of energetic and cultivated men devoted to obtaining, comparing, examining all the information that could possibly bear on the conduct of a campaign, was held to have had no slight influence in determining the actual result of that momentous struggle.

And a believing Christian meets death, having his soul furnished with an ‘Intelligence department.’ It is supplied with the most accurate information, as to the limits of his enemy’s power, as to the resources at his own disposal, as to the dangers which undoubtedly await him, as to the bright and confident hopes which he may reasonably encourage.

‘Yes!’ it may be said; ‘but what if, in an age of doubt, some of us question the accuracy of some of the intelligence which is thus supplied?’ Very well; Consider the credentials of your informant. He speaks not from conjecture, but on the strength of experience. His most

important announcement is not a matter of theory or opinion, but a hard fact. If He tells us that our bodies will rise again, He points to the historically attested fact that He Himself has risen, and that the Power which raised Him will raise us. If He "tells us of heavenly things"—to use His own words¹—it is because heaven has been and is His Eternal Home, and He speaks of what He knows. Not that the world of the departed, as He unveils it to us, is all sunshine. The destiny of those who die deliberately rejecting God and holiness is set before us not less clearly than that of the blessed; and the sternest things that are said on this awful subject fell from His own Blessed Lips. He would not leave to His servants the odium—if so it was to be—of proclaiming them. Altogether, since His living among us, the world beyond the grave is sufficiently well known to Christians for all practical purposes. The Intermediate state, the General resurrection, the Last Judgment, the two fixed conditions beyond, are facts on which we may calculate in our reckoning with the future. And yet more, the measure of our own weakness, the strength and deceitfulness of our enemy, the yet greater strength and larger wisdom of our True and Only Friend—all this is certain too.

It is certain enough for all who really wish to be convinced. Nothing is easier for a Christian than to lapse into a state of doubt. He has only to be careless about keeping his conscience in order, irregular in his habits of private prayer, unconcerned as to whether he communicates with proper dispositions or at all, indifferent to the claims of plain duty, idle, aimless, perhaps dissipated—and doubts will come to him fast enough. But his doubt, having a moral and not an intellectual origin, will be no measure of the certainty which is really at his disposal.

We may, if we will, know all that is necessary in

¹ St. John iii. 12.

order to meet death with resignation and courage ; and by giving us this knowledge our Lord has made the first great step to giving us the victory over it.

2. Then, secondly, our Lord has enabled us to overcome the shrinking from death, which is so natural to human beings. As the Apostle says, " He has delivered those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."¹ Fear of an impending evil may be the worst of bondages ; and many men have had this fear of death in an exaggerated degree. It is, unhappily, not difficult for me to recall a highly cultivated man, who had lost his Christian faith, and whom the approach of death inspired with nothing short of terror. Death was kept at bay as long as possible by all sorts of expedients—relaxation of work, change of air, everything that medical science could suggest. But at last it came near : as a darkness which he thought might mean anything or nothing, but which in itself was horrible. This was nothing less than a relapse into a state of feeling very common in the old pagan world from which Christ our Lord delivered us. Go into a gallery of ancient funereal inscriptions in the great Vatican collection at Rome or elsewhere, and note the hopelessness with which the old pagans take leave of those whom they have loved in life ; generally speaking, all, so far as they knew, is over, and over for ever. And contrast this with the buoyant delight and joy of the early Christian tombstones—radiant with hope as they are in the prospect of the coming Resurrection. This is the measure of one element of the Christian's victory : he no longer fears death.

At times, no doubt, Christians have looked forward to death with rapture. Some of the early Christians were so enamoured of it that they put themselves in the way of becoming martyrs by defying the religion and authorities of the old pagan empire. This sort of forward

¹ Heb. ii. 15.

enthusiasm was not encouraged by the early Church. To encounter death with calm courage, when it came, was one thing; to seek it by word or deed was another. But it showed how completely the old dread had passed away; how thoroughly Christians had learned to think of death as the gate of life.

Now, our Lord enables us to overcome the fear of dying by the conviction that He, Crucified and Risen, is and will be with us. Apart from His Divine power, He supports us by the sympathy of His Human Nature, which makes Him so intimately our Brother and our Friend. When our human weakness shrinks at the thought of death, He comes to us with the authority of Personal experience. He, too, has died; He, too, has known the secrets of the grave. He has grappled with all from which the nature that is common to Him and us instinctively recoils.

And thus we do *not* die alone.

“Alone! no, He hath been there long before.
 Long hath He waited on that shore
 For us who were to come
 To our eternal home.
 Oh! is He not the lifelong Friend we know
 More privately than any friend below?”¹

And thus His voice reaches us from beyond the grave—
 “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death.”²
 “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”³

¹ Faber, “The Shore of Eternity.” ² Rev. i. 18. ³ Isa. xliii. 1-3.

3. But the victory given through our Lord Jesus Christ over death will only be complete when we do at the last actually rise from the dead. Until then it is a victory in anticipation, or a victory in hope and temper and spirit, a victory such as that of a general who, though worsted for the moment in the field, will not despair of his country. Until then, as a matter of hard fact, death is, within limits, a conqueror; there is no denying his partial triumph so long as our bodies are mouldering in the grave. He may at least boast of having impaired the completeness of human life, and of having planted his heel upon one portion of our being, so long as the work of physical decomposition is not reversed. But when hereafter we rise from the dead, this limited victory of death will be at an end: since death will be expelled from the ground he had thus temporarily occupied. "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."¹

It was once my privilege to be present at the close of a Christian life, which showed how clearly faith in the coming Resurrection is bound up with real victory over the humiliation and pain involved in dying. It was clear that the end was very near; and as the sufferer had been greatly and deservedly beloved, some of those who were present were quite unable to control expressions of distress. For some time she had been silent—too weak, as it was thought, to speak; but the sight of those around moved her to a last effort. "Why," she said, "should any of you feel as you do about me? Why cannot you feel with me? The time has now come to which I have been looking forward for more than forty years; and we ought all of us to be thankful that it has come. I am

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 54.

dying, I know, but"—and here her voice became very subdued, but very clear and earnest—"I shall die in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change my vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able, ever to subdue all things unto Himself." She was unable to say more, and only expressed herself in very broken sentences during the short time that passed before death. But the calm triumph of her words produced a deep impression on all who were present; it was like a breath of invigorating air wafted across the centuries from the age of the Apostles into our age of dull and enfeebled faith.

How may we hope to share in this blessed victory? Not by trying to deem little that which no wise man can think of as other than supremely important. Not by steeling ourselves—should natural temperament lend itself to the process—into stoical indifference to the inevitable. The victory of ignorance and the victory of moral obtuseness are alike disastrous defeats. Nothing is gained by shutting out from view the tremendous experience that assuredly awaits each one of us at no distant day: nothing, by the attempt to preoccupy thought and imagination and memory and will with the perishing trivialities among which we pass our time. "O turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity; and quicken me in Thy way."¹ But why should we fear the parting from friends, if it be only for a while? Why should we dread the breaking up of our earthly tabernacle, if all is to be restored hereafter? One thing only need we dread—the sting of death; the sting which sin lodges in the conscience at the thought of meeting a perfectly Holy God. Let us

¹ Ps. cxix. 37.

remember that the strength of sin is the moral Law ; and that the moral Law ceases to be the strength of sin, not when it is disobeyed or defied, but when past transgressions of it have been pardoned through the precious Blood of Him Who is the Great Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and when, by the action of the Holy Spirit, moral Law ceases to be an outward rule which constrains and condemns us through becoming an inward principle in the light and strength of which it is our happiness to live. "There is no condemnation for them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;"¹ because there is no longer in them the consciousness of opposition between the will of the creature and the Law of the Creator. The completion of this inward victory is the aim of every true Christian life ; and every sincere prayer, every mental act whereby faith and love grow in the soul ; every true effort of self-denial and obedience ; every good Communion, is a step towards it. And then when the end comes we too may hope to say, as tens of thousands of the redeemed have said before us, "The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore shall I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil—for Thou art with me."²

¹ Rom. viii. 1.

² Ps. xxiii. 1-4.

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cc. Filey 10 May 1903.

SERMON XII.

TUTORIAL OFFICE OF THE JEWISH LAW.¹

GAL. iii. 24.

Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

THIS is one of those sentences—often to be met with in St. Paul's writings—into which he compresses a whole world of truth or feeling; sentences in which the message that he has to announce reaches its tersest and most vigorous expression.

I.

St. Paul is explaining to the Galatian Christians, some of whom were inclined to fall back on Jewish habits, the true place and office of the old Jewish Law in religious history; and by the Law he means, not simply the Ten Commandments, or even the whole body of precepts contained in the Books of Moses, but the sacred literature and ordinances as received in their entirety by the Jewish people in his own day. Of the Law, taken in this broad and comprehensive sense, he asserts that it was a schoolmaster to bring Jews by birth, like himself, to faith in and love for our Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated 'schoolmaster' in this passage does not mean the master of a school. It is the name of a slave who had charge of his owner's children, and who, among other

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, August 5, 1877.

duties, led them by the hand to the porch or house where the teacher who was really to instruct them gave his lessons. This slave was not merely a servant who kept the children neat and out of the way of danger; he was a sort of private tutor as well, who prepared them for the instructions they were to receive from the philosopher or professor whose class they attended. These higher lessons were quite beyond the power of the tutor himself to give; but he could do something in the way of removing the difficulties which prevented young people from understanding what was taught, and above all he could take care that those entrusted to his charge should be punctually in their places when the philosopher or instructor began his work.

Now, by this reference to the family arrangements of the ancient world, St. Paul is able to place before his readers very clearly the real relation of the Jewish Law to the Gospel. St. Paul takes up a middle position on the subject, between those who so exaggerated the importance of the Jewish Law as to consider it a final revelation of God to man, and those who went so far as to speak of it as religiously useless. No: the Law was not final; for Jesus Christ had come, and His Gospel, although based on it, had superseded it. No: the Law was not useless; for it was a tutor charged with the high and honourable duty of bringing the Jewish people down to the School of Jesus Christ. In the Apostle's eyes there had been now for about twenty-four years past one great School open to all the races of men, and in which alone instruction was to be had respecting the subjects which are best worth every man's attentive study; that School was the Church of Jesus Christ. In St. Paul's eyes there was one Great Teacher, only One, Who had absolute claims upon the intellectual and moral allegiance of men; One Prince of philosophers and prophets, at Whose voice all

others should hold their peace, since, while they only guessed at truth, or taught it in fragments, He possessed and proclaimed it in its entirety, without error and without imperfection. For "in Him were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;"¹ and since His Incarnation He had sat as the Light and Instructor of the nations—first visibly, during the years of His earthly ministry, and then invisibly, as speaking through His Apostles and His Church. He was the true Master through Whom the Eternal God would teach mankind its highest lessons, and the value of other teachers varied with their disposition or their power to lead mankind to become His pupils. Pagan religions and pagan philosophy did this service occasionally and incidentally for pure and noble men; but the Law and Religion of Israel was from first to last a preparation for Him, a shadow of good things to come, a tutor whose business and privilege it was to point the way to the dwelling of the Great Master.

II.

How did the Jewish religion or Law answer to St. Paul's description? What were the means by which it did lead honest hearts and minds away from allegiance to itself, and end by handing them over to the Church or School of Jesus Christ?

There were three main means, among others, by which this was effected.

(a) The religion of Israel brought men to Christ first of all by the light and the constraining force of prophecy. If any people were ever encouraged by their sacred literature to live in and for the future, that people was Israel. From Genesis to Malachi there is a long chain of predictions,—at first vague and indeterminate, and then, as the centuries pass, becoming narrower, clearer,

¹ Col. ii. 3.

more and more definite, until at last they might seem to close around their Object and to describe Him by anticipation, but completely. First a human deliverance of some kind, then a personal Saviour is announced. He is to come of the descendants of Abraham, then of the race of Israel, then of the tribe of Judah, and then of the family of David. He is to be a Monarch, and yet a Sufferer. He is to be born supernaturally and yet to die. He is to be buried; and yet to conquer the allegiance of the Gentile world. This one prediction indeed must have struck—it did strike—thoughtful Jews as something peculiarly astonishing; that from their own little country would arise a Teacher, Whose life would be marked by humiliation and apparent failure, while in the end He would bring the proud heathen peoples around to the knowledge of the True God.

For many a year such language must have seemed too good, as we say, to be true—too evidently the imagining of pious prophets and teachers, to have any destined place in the world of hard facts. Yet there it was in the sacred books of Israel, confronting one generation after another; there it was, sometimes neglected, sometimes studied intently, and then again cast aside, an object of awful wonder, of wild misunderstanding, of audacious speculation; there it was, at once a rebuke and an encouragement, a difficulty yet a witness and a guarantee—a lamp to the feet and a light to the paths, and yet a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence—as fathers and sons and grandsons, one after another, read it and passed away.

At last He to Whom it pointed came among men; and then it had done its work, just as light along the line of the horizon disappears when we see the orb of the rising sun. He did die in humiliation and shame; and then He passed on to the spiritual conquest of the Gentile world.

He was exactly what prophecy had foretold, and He Himself appealed to it as warranting His claims. He claimed to be what prophecy had sketched beforehand. "Search the Scriptures," He said to the Jews of His day, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me."¹ So to the perplexed disciples after the Resurrection: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself."² And thus when St. Peter is arguing that Christians who believe in an Ascended Saviour have not "followed cunningly devised fables," he refers, first of all, to what he himself had seen at the Transfiguration, and then he adds, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts."³ And the first book in the New Testament, St. Matthew's Gospel, was written mainly with the object of showing in detail to the Christians of Judæa that Jesus of Nazareth fully corresponded to the Christ of prophecy. Again and again we meet with the phrase, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying;" as though it was not more true that prophecy had been given to lead men to Jesus Christ, than that Jesus Christ had come to justify the truth of prophecy. Read this Gospel through, my brethren, and observe how, in it, the scattered sayings of Jewish prophecy are brought to a focus, and seem to centre in and be satisfied by a single life; how prophecy in the Law takes Israel by the hand and leads him down to the Redeemer as the Certificate of its truth, and the Object of its existence.

¹ St. John v. 39. ² St. Luke xxiv. 25-27. ³ 2 St. Peter i. 16, 19.

(β) Secondly, the Jewish religion brought men to Christ by the ceremonial Law, which formed so important a part of it. It invested with ceremony the worship of God, the great occasions of state, the private events of human life. Ceremony is a kind of language; it is a means of conveying ideas from mind to mind; it is the language, not of speech, but of action. It is less explicit than the words we use, but it is often more suggestive. Every day of our lives, as we stand face to face with each other, a thousand gestures render words unnecessary, and convey more meaning than words could convey. Every day of our lives, during our intercourse with others, we read this language of action as we listen to that other language of the tongue; we modify and interpret the words we hear by what we observe of the expressive gestures which accompany them. Ceremony, as an instrument for expressing ideas, strikes its roots far into the original instincts of our nature; and when God embodied it largely in the religion which He gave to Israel, He had much deeper purposes in view than lay upon the surface of what He prescribed. Never let us forget, as we read such books as Leviticus, that the ancient ritual of Israel was not of human origin,—that it was enjoined from heaven. Doubtless it was intended to give shape, expression, fixity to the solemn faith in and worship of God revealed to Israel; doubtless, too, it was meant to establish a barrier, visible to sense, between the people of Revelation and the heathen races around. But these results might conceivably have been secured by other rites than those which are commanded in the Law; and the ceremonial of Leviticus had a meaning and value over and above this. It was a sort of acted prophecy: it looked forward—every detail of it—to a coming time, a higher worship, a religion of which it was but the shadow thrown forward provisionally across the

ages, until the complete reality which it heralded should appear. What is the meaning—pious Jews must have again and again exclaimed—of all these carefully elaborated rites, of these solemn days, these costly dresses, these bloodstained sacrifices? Why these and no others? Why these details, many of them apparently so trivial, yet enforced by sanctions so imposing, so awful? The answer was: All this ceremonial Law has an object beyond itself; it is the shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things; it is a teacher who will lead his pupils to the feet of One to Whose Person and work he thus perpetually refers in the language of symbol.

All that could be gathered from the ceremonial Law, before Christ's coming, was that it meant something beyond itself. What it meant could only be known afterwards, and in the light of the Gospel. Jews could not have guessed that the Sabbath pointed to the Eternal Rest of heaven, and Circumcision to the purification of man's nature by a New Birth, and the Paschal Lamb to the Divine Victim offered for human sin on Mount Calvary, and the Table of Shewbread to the Blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. We Christians see all this, and much more, plainly enough, but we could hardly have divined it if we had lived in the ages before the Incarnation. But when Christ came, this Key to the meaning of Jewish ceremonial was seen to fit—it pointed to Him and His Work from first to last. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to show this—to show that the ceremonial Law of the Jews, so far from being a final and complete rule of life and worship, did but prefigure blessings that were to follow it; that it was a tutor to lead men to the school or Church of Christ.

γ. Thirdly, the Jewish Law, or religion, brought men to Christ by creating a sense of moral need which He alone could satisfy. The Jewish Law was not merely a collection

of prophecies and a code of ceremonial; it was also, and chiefly, a body of moral precepts respecting conduct. The duty of the sacred people; the duty of its kings and priests; the duty of each individual Israelite, towards God, and towards his fellow-men,—this it ruled in detail. The Ten Commandments are at this moment the moral rule of Christendom; and, as might be shown, if time sufficed, they contain in a compendious form an exhaustive statement of human duty, towards the Author of our being, and towards our fellow-creatures. It was this Law which the pious Israelite embroidered on his robe; it was this Law of which the King of Israel sang that it was—

“An undefiled Law, converting the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, giving wisdom unto the simple.

The statutes of the Lord are right; and rejoice the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is Thy servant taught, and in keeping of them is great reward.”¹

Such was the moral Law given to Israel; yet, practically, it seemed to be a failure. It was not kept. Even the best Israelites did not keep it; while the greater number neglected it altogether. St. Paul quotes from the Jewish Scriptures the severe sentences which, taken broadly, describe what was the condition of Israel in his own day. “It is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become abominable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” As he proceeds, the severity of the description grows apace. “Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full

¹ Ps. xix. 7, 8, 10, 11.

of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.”¹ And then the Apostle anticipates a Jewish objection, that this language, as originally used, describes the moral condition of heathens, not of Jews, and he answers it by appealing to a principle insisted on by the Jewish doctors, that the Law spoke, primarily, not to all the world, but only to the chosen people. “We know that whatsoever things the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law.”² Israel was, in fact, as bad as its Sacred Book described; it made its boast in the Law, but in breaking the Law it dishonoured its God.

How was this to be explained? How was it consistent with the Creator’s Wisdom that He should have given to His people a Law which He must have foreseen would not be observed? St. Paul answers this by saying that the Law was given to teach man an ideal or rule of righteousness, and thereby to discover to him his own sinfulness. “Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions;”³ it brought them to light; it carried the lamp of moral truth into the dark places of the human conscience; it taught sinful man to see himself, at least partially, as God sees him. Nay, but it also did more; the presence of this Divine Rule of right stimulated the dormant sinfulness of human nature to new activity. “Without the Law sin was dead; but when the commandment came, sin revived.”⁴ But is not this, a few might ask, a heavy indictment against the Divine Author of the Law, that it actually promotes the energy of sin? No, St. Paul replies; the real promoter of sin is not the Law, but the debased dispositions of man. Good food is poison to a diseased body; the sunshine shrivels up a

¹ Rom. iii. 10-18.

² Rom. iii. 19.

³ Gal. iii. 19.

⁴ Rom. vii. 8, 9.

sickly plant. But the food and the sunshine are God's blessings, notwithstanding, to healthy nature; and the moral Law is not in itself less holy and just and good because sinful man is irritated by it into new acts of disobedience. "What shall we say, then? Is the Law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the Law; for I had not known lust, except the Law had said thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. . . . Wherefore the Law is holy and the commandment holy, and just, and good."¹ The moral Law—God's Moral Nature in its relation to human life, thrown into the form of commandments—is beyond criticism; but when given to sinful man it only discovered a want which it could not satisfy; nay, such was man's condition in that older dispensation, that it was the occasion of aggravating an evil which it could not heal.

And thus it was that the moral Law, like the Jewish ritual, like Jewish prophecy, but with more effective power than either, led men down to the School of Jesus Christ. It disclosed wants, heartaches, miseries, which He alone could heal and satisfy. It enhanced the aching sense of unpardoned guilt before God. "Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the Law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets: even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood."² And the Law further convinced man of his moral

¹ Rom. vii. 7, 8, 12.

² Rom. iii. 20-25.

weakness, of his inability without the grace of God to obey it. But then, "What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."¹ To Christ the Law leads, not merely as a Pardoner of guilt, but as a Giver and Source of moral force which will do what man, of his own strength, cannot do. This new life of obedience, prompted from within by a new moral Power, not imposed from without upon moral decrepitude, St. Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus."² It is the gift of our gracious Master—His greatest and most signal gift to those who accept Him.

III.

How it is claimed may be discussed, please God, hereafter. For the present let us observe what we may learn from the Jewish Law, thus leading us as a tutor to the School of Christ.

1. In these words we see a test of the value of all religious privileges or gifts. Do they, or do they not, lead souls to Christ? That is the question—the supreme question—for a Christian. In St. Paul's eyes it was the distinction of the Jewish Law that it could thus lead the Jewish people to faith in and love for our Divine Redeemer. And this is the criterion which we Christians should apply to the several agencies, persons, privileges, which bear upon or belong to religion. Are they likely to make us give more of our thought and heart and will to our Saviour, or will they interest us in themselves, and so keep us at a distance from Him? Doubtless, a great deal depends upon ourselves; the majority of the Jewish

¹ Rom. viii. 3, 4.

² Rom. viii. 2.

people were not led to Christ in St. Paul's day, but the fault did not lie with the Jewish Law. And if, in the present day, we hear people saying that Church privileges do not lead them to Christ, the explanation is not to be found in the services of the Church, which are full of Him, but in something wrong in themselves. Unless there be in the soul that secret yearning for better things which will make the most of the opportunities offered to it, no mere external privilege will lead it to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. In all ages some souls live on crumbs, while others perish amidst profusion. This man has no Church services at hand, no Communion, no instruction; yet he gathers up the fragments that remain in memory, and for him the wilderness blossoms as the rose. That man lives surrounded by all the means of grace, his soul flooded by the light of heaven, and yet he might as well be a heathen. This man finds in Scripture only arguments for unbelief; that man sees in human philosophy the reasons for faith. But, bearing this in mind, it remains true that the effect of a practice, or friendship, or line of thought, or taste, is, generally speaking, to be tested by the simple question, whether it does bring the soul nearer to our Lord, whether, like the Jewish Law, it is a tutor who keeps the Great Master's claim upon his pupils steadily, nay, exclusively in view.

2. Observe here, secondly, what may be the religious use of all law, all rule, to the human soul; it should teach man to know from experience something of his weakness, and so should lead him to throw himself on a Higher Power for pardon and strength. The moral Law, written indistinctly on the hearts of the heathen, did this sort of service for the Gentile world. It made the thoughtful heathen look upwards for traces of the Invisible Lawgiver; it rendered him dissatisfied with his own efforts to achieve that which he knew to be certainly right; it led him to

yearn, however vaguely, for pardon and for strength, to be received at the hands of some Unseen Power. The rules which we Christians make for our daily lives may help us in the same sort of way.

No prudent Christian lives without a Rule of life; a Rule about prayer, about self-examination, about Communions, about personal expenditure, about intercourse with others, about the disposal of time, about study of Scripture, about management of his temper, of his thoughts and feelings and resolves. And such a Rule is meant, no doubt, to be kept; and in the Church of the Divine Redeemer, with the aid of His wonder-working grace, it can be kept. Every Christian may say with St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ That strengtheneth me."¹ But practically, for the great majority of us, such a Rule acts as did the ancient Jewish Law for the Jews. It is a tutor to bring us afresh, with a new sense of dependence, of guilt, of weakness, to the Feet of Jesus Christ. It was made and accepted in some moment of penitence and fervour; and that moment has passed. Since then we have passed through a time of darkness, of depressed moral effort, of enfeebled resolution, of shattered hopes—if through nothing worse. And so, with our broken Rule of life in our hands, we turn back to Him in Whose strength we hoped to keep it: "Lord," we cry, "lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."²

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling.

"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

Our Rule of life, like the Jewish Law of old, has done us good service; it has brought us, as a private tutor, to the School and Cross of Christ.

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

² Ps. iv. 6.

3. Thirdly, in these words we may see the exceeding preciousness of the gospel—the matchless value of the Faith of the Church of God. Men sometimes ask whether the Gospel too be not a tutor-religion, whose business it is to lead to something beyond—to some broad and grand Religion of the future which will control the hearts and thoughts of coming generations. The answer is, No; undoubtedly, No. On the one hand, the Gospel does or may satisfy all the wants of the human soul—the need of pardon, of peace, of a sense of re-established relations with God, of a good hope for the eternal future. On the other, the Gospel is so far from pointing to a coming Religion which will supersede it, that it everywhere proclaims its own finality: its motto is, “Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”¹ Those souls who look beyond it, and would stray beyond it, will find themselves in an outer darkness, in which even what the Jewish Law could do for them is left undone. Those who thankfully endeavour to make the most of it will, as the years pass, have increasing cause to say, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”²

Yes! the Religion of Jesus Christ is God’s last word to the human soul; and how should we not prize the privilege of having received it! Surely this unique privilege is not a thing to be taken for granted—to be acquiesced in with the tranquil, languid apathy with which a Mohammedan or a pagan might receive from his parents his hereditary creed. Each Christian heart should glow with a keen personal sense of love for our Divine Redeemer; and this sense must be based on a felt need of Him, and on the recollection that once in the fulness of time, He came to satisfy the wants of an expectant world. Mark His own words: “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you that

¹ Heb. xiii. 8.

² St. John vi. 68.

many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that ye see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that ye hear and have not heard them.”¹ Why thus blessed? Because Christ, known and loved, is the Revelation of the Character and Heart of God. Why so blessed? Because Christ, known and loved, is the Fount of pardon, grace, and strength for lost and sinful man. Why so blessed? Because—and this was in the mind of Jesus, and in the mind of Paul—because Christ revealed to man, as Incarnate, Teaching, Crucified, Risen, Ascended, closes a long period of weary expectation; because He is the Rest of souls after centuries of labour; because He is the Dawn of day after long ages of darkness and of twilight. “When the fulness of time had come, God sent forth” from His abyss of eternal glory, “His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them which were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”² Let us pray that, in thought and act, we may duly prize that which was so long withheld—that for which our Jewish predecessors were prepared by the tutorial service of their ancient Law. Let us, indeed, thank God for the gifts of nature, “for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life: but above all for His inestimable Love in the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.”

¹ St. Luke x. 23, 24.

² Gal. iv. 4, 5.

SERMON XIII.

JUSTIFYING FAITH.¹

GAL. iii. 24.

Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

LAST Sunday² we were considering the place and use of the Mosaic Law in the religious education of the people of Israel; the Law was a tutor entrusted with the duty of leading Israel down to the School of Jesus Christ. This duty was discharged, partly by the voice of prophecy, partly by the symbolic teaching of the sacred ceremonies, and partly by the sense of guilt and weakness created in the conscience of the people of Israel by the moral precepts given by God to Israel, but which Israel could not keep.

This threefold guidance of the Law was not by any means irresistible; it was actually declined by a majority of those for whom it was intended. But it was sufficient for sincere souls, looking out for traces of God's Will, and anxious to make the most of anything that they could find. And so—in the treatment of our subject—last Sunday afternoon, the Law had brought its pupil to the door of the School of Christ; and to-day we have to consider what Christ will do for him that the Law could not do; in other words, what is meant by that justification

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, August 12, 1877.

² See Sermon xii. above.

by faith, which the Apostle says was the final purpose of this providential guidance: "The Law was a tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

That we may be justified by faith! Truly these are words across which the fierce passions of controversy have swept for centuries; and controversies are apt to leave deposits which obscure, even in sincere and simple minds, the sense of the sacred writer when he wrote the words. What does the Apostle mean by "justified"? He means make "just," or "righteous." And what is righteousness or justice? As applied to man, it means a man's being as he should be; it means the conformity of his life to a standard of what is absolutely good and true. One of the questions which prominently engaged the attention of the Jewish doctors was this: "How was it possible for man to attain to justice or righteousness?" And their answer was, "By keeping the Law." The Law was the Rule of righteousness, and the Jew who kept it was righteous. But, then, the question which St. Paul pressed on them again and again was, Whether any Jew did really keep it; or rather—as we saw last Sunday—he quoted the Law itself with great effect, to show that, so far from being kept, it was generally neglected. "There is," said the Law, "none righteous; no, not one. Therefore," concludes the Apostle, "by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight; for by the Law is the knowledge of sin."¹

Thus the question arises whether any other method of justification, *i.e.* of becoming what we should be, is attainable; and St. Paul answers that question in the text. The Law, he says, led its best pupils down to the School of Christ, that they might be justified, not by obedience to its precepts, but by a very different process,

¹ Rom. iii. 10, 20.

which would in the end secure obedience, and a great deal else—that they might be justified by faith.

And here a difficulty presents itself, which has very naturally and seriously exercised thoughtful minds in successive ages, and not least in our own. How is it possible, they ask, that such a mere motion or emotion of the soul as faith can achieve this startling and solid result—the making a soul to be as it should be before a Holy God? A change of conduct! Yes; that they conceive may make the necessary difference. Conduct is something tangible and producible; conduct is a thing which can be weighed and measured. But faith—how airy, how unsubstantial, how disconnected from solid, permanent results on character, how nearly allied to the fanciful, to the imaginative! How can faith justify? How can so serious an effect be traced to so inadequate and ineffective a cause?

The answer to this inquiry can only be given by stating what faith really is; and perhaps we shall best state what faith is while we proceed to answer the question—How is it that faith justifies, or makes man to be as he should be, before God, the All-seeing and the All-holy?

I.

Now, here we may observe at the outset that faith, looking only at the surface of the matter, does for the believing man at least one great and striking service, which of itself goes some way to making him what he should be. Faith raises the aim, the purposes, and thought of man from the seen to the Unseen, from the material to the Immaterial, from earth to Heaven. What is man's condition without faith, without that world of glorious but unseen realities which faith makes present? It is the condition of a slave. Unbelieving man is always a

slave—the slave of nature, the slave of matter. When no higher world than the world of sense is open to man's view, he falls under the cruel and exacting bondage of sense and nature. His horizon is that of his bodily senses, neither more nor less. His thoughts and feelings are bounded by that which he can see, and taste, and handle or claw, and smell. To him the visible world is the universe. To him, he himself—and his brother man—is an animal—a magnificent animal, no doubt, yet nothing but an animal; and he notes with eager and jealous accuracy how the processes of birth and growth and disease and death and decomposition are the same in his own case and that of the brutes around him. With him feeling is only nervous sensation, thought is phosphorus, the soul is a non-existent abstraction which man, in his petty vanity, has coaxed out of the higher illusions of his senses. Thus he buries his thought deep in the folds of matter; and his thought, mark you, may be all the while exceptionally keen and strong, yet not therefore the less enslaved to matter. Perhaps he has no turn for abstract speculations; nevertheless, in the absence of faith, he is still wholly occupied by that which comes in contact with his senses. His shop, or his broad acres, or his family, or his enjoyments, are for him the universe: he sees no horizons beyond. And since nothing is more certain than the law whereby we men become like that on which we gaze—heavenly, if we are looking upwards, earthly, or worse, if we are looking down—it follows that the man who lives in and for matter will gather more and more of its grossness around his spirit. And if his understanding warns him that the material world, which is his all, will pass, and if in his higher moments voices sound from out the depths of his being to protest impatiently that matter does not satisfy; still, the motto of those who are taking their fill of sense, whether in its

grosser or its more refined forms, is in the last resort always this, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."¹

The nobler minds of every generation have felt the misery of this; they have felt that man was meant for some higher destiny than this enslavement to nature, to matter, to sense. And, in the absence of any better expedient, they have endeavoured to provide an escape by the exercise of the intelligence and the exercise of the imagination—in other words, by poetry and by philosophy. Poetry is at least very frequently the endeavour to invest human life with the glow and beauty of a higher sphere. It is the protest of the human soul against enslavement to the prosaic uniformity of materialized life; it is the effort of imagination to provide an outlook for all in man that will not, cannot, consent to believe that man is nothing but a very highly organized animal. And philosophy is the endeavour to ascend without emotion from that which meets the senses to that which is beyond them; to mount from the observed effect to the hidden cause; to construct, if it may be, an account and theory of universal being, and in the process of doing so, to provide for human thought an asylum, or rather, a throne, beyond and above the frontiers of matter.

Thus, in their different ways, philosophy and poetry imply the degradation of merely materialized life by their efforts to better it; and I am far from denying that they have made noble contributions to the higher side of human existence; sometimes, indeed, in the great Christian ages, they have been the willing handmaids of Faith. But even in the centuries when this was impossible, they have done something to raise the human spirit out of the narrow prison-house of matter; and Homer and Æschylus, and Socrates and Plato, with whatever reserves, will be names

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 32.

held in high honour to the end of time. But whatever poetry and philosophy might achieve for a few individuals, or in the hands of great masters, they do not in the long run free men from the tyranny of matter; indeed, their fitful efforts to achieve this may remind us of the proceedings of the flying-machine which it was attempted to construct some thirty years ago on the banks of the Thames.

Imagination—such is the verdict of experience—if unsustained by a heaven-born companion like faith, does but mount in one generation to surrender itself in the next, almost at discretion, to the grossest suggestions of sense. And philosophy, if not based on certainties beyond the reach of sense, does but construct its imposing abstractions in one age to shatter them into fragments in the next, and then it ends,—as with the Epicureans of antiquity, as with the school which has last appeared on the scene in Germany—it ends by plunging headlong into matter with impetuous enthusiasm, and prostituting its powers to reconstructing the very fetters from which centuries ago, in its fresh and early youth, it promised emancipation.

No, brethren, if man is to be freed from the empire of sense and nature, it must be through his endowment with a new faculty, such as is faith. Faith is a new kind of sight, which opens upon the soul a world, wholly beyond the reach of the bodily senses. Faith is practically a new sense—a sense whose business it is to discern God, and all that touches His Nature, and His action upon the world and upon mankind. Faith makes the man who possesses it to differ from the man who has it not, much as a person in the enjoyment of good bodily sight differs from a blind man. “Faith,” as the Apostle says, “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;”¹ it is evidence to itself of the reality of its object. And thus faith

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

cannot but elevate man. With the unseen world spread out before it, the Magnificence and Infinity of the Divine Being, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, both God and Man, the unnumbered Angelic Intelligences around the Throne, the little suspected but constant communications passing hourly, momentarily, between earth and heaven, faith introduces the soul of man to a new sphere, in which the soul is insensibly bettered, if only by having its attention distracted from the petty material interests of daily human life, and fixed on the splendours of the Unseen and the Eternal. And thus faith does raise the soul of man heavenwards; and this elevation of the soul, more solid and permanent than anything which can be provided by poetry or philosophy, in that it brings the soul face to Face with the True and Unchanging God, is of itself a considerable step in the direction of making a man what he should be—in other words, of his justification.

II.

A second service which faith renders to man is this: it expands and strengthens all the departments of his spirit's life, his will and affections not less than his understanding. And this wide and comprehensive scope of its action upon the soul of itself does much to make man to be what he should be; since not one power or faculty is invigorated, but all. Here we are at once confronted by a great and common misconception, the mistake of supposing that true faith is only an act of apprehension, only a bare movement of the understanding apprehending truth beyond the province of sense. My brethren, such an act of apprehension can only be called "faith" by courtesy. For faith, in its origin, as well as in its growth and vitality, is a prompting of the heart and will, at least as much as

of the understanding; "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness,"¹ and this moral element in faith is the guarantee of its power to change the character.

If we doubt this, let us try to explain to ourselves how it is that of two heathens similarly circumstanced, to whom the Gospel is preached by a Christian missionary, one accepts and the other rejects it; or how it is, as we may see in many an English home, that of brothers who have had exactly the same education, one is a devout Christian, the other an unbeliever. The explanation which is often given refers the difference to God's secret and eternal predestination of souls. To some the old words, "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth,"² seem to yield a stern but adequate solution. But God's predestination of souls, however true, is only half the truth which explains their destiny; it is equally true, though we may be unable to reconcile this truth with the foregoing, that every soul determines its own destiny, and that God's predestination is never really arbitrary in the sense of being independent of the soul's secret and self-determined history. When of the two heathens I am considering one man accepts the Faith as it is proposed to him, and the other rejects it, this we may be sure is not, so far as the man is concerned, an accident—it is an effect of causes which have already been long in operation. If these two men have known nothing else, they have known from boyhood that there is a distinction between right and wrong, since this knowledge is part of the original outfit of the human mind. What is right and what is wrong—that they may have apprehended very imperfectly; but they cannot have been ignorant that the primal distinction exists. And this distinction of itself implies a law—a law of right as distinct from wrong; and a law implies a Lawgiver. Who is He? What is He?

¹ Rom. x. 10.

² Rom. ix. 18.

What can be known about Him? Will He ever discover Himself? These are questions which will be repeated again and again in the one mind, eager by searching to find out God, and ready to make the most of anything which He may reveal about Himself. But they will be repressed and silenced in the other, as if they were the mere echoes of some stupid and discredited superstition. The distinction between right and wrong itself, it has been said by one who felt thus, can only be upheld by a man with a bad digestion. Well, then, on this original difference in the way of treating the sense of right and wrong will subsequently depend the different kinds of welcome given to the missionary, nay, the grave difference between faith and unbelief. The one man wishes to know nothing of the Author of the moral Law within him; the other wishes to know as much as he can. And thus to the one the evidence that God has revealed Himself will appear wholly insufficient; to the other, it will appear to be overwhelming.

Thus we see how faith is originally prompted by the affections and the will; how it grows out of them. Men believe because they wish to believe, if they can, and think that the evidence they have warrants them in doing so. They reject belief because there is a secret warp in their will against the truths which are objects of religious faith. "Light," said our Lord, "is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."¹ And as faith is cradled in the heart and will, so it never is independent of them; it is an act of the moral nature as well as of the understanding from first to last.

No doubt the word "faith" is used by an accommodation of mere unfruitful knowledge of Divine things, as when St. James says that "the devils believe and tremble."² The devils think of God just as a scientific man might think

¹ St. John iii. 19.

² St. James ii. 19.

of a natural catastrophe, which he was certain would occur, say, the outbreak of a volcano, or a hurricane. They think of God with intelligence and curiosity, but also with aversion. Having, as they have, at command the opportunities of disembodied spirits, whether good or evil, they cannot close their eyes to His Existence and His Power; but they recognize Him only to fear and hate Him—they believe and they tremble. This is an extreme example of the apprehension of God divorced from love; but something like it may be observed in all who hold the truth in unrighteousness. The faith of which St. Paul says so much in his Epistles, is inseparable from love—inseparable in fact, though separable in idea, in our way of looking at it. As the illuminated understanding gazes on the Majesty of God, on the Person and Redeeming Work of Christ, the heart is withal kindled and the will is braced: faith, which deserves the name, “worketh,” and it “worketh by love.”¹ Faith may be taken to pieces by students and divines, and its mental element may be studied apart from the ingredients of love and will which go to make it up; just as the anatomist may treat the arterial system apart from the nerves of the human body, although in the living subject each is essential to its vitality. We may, if we like, fix our eyes only on the concave, but it cannot exist alone; it always implies the convex. Those who have gone furthest in the direction of saying that faith, considered as bare mental apprehension of the Person and Merits of Christ, can justify before God, have not (so far as I know) ventured to say that any one is justified who is without a ray of the Love of God in his soul. No! read through the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews to see what faith is in itself; how practical and productive a thing it is; how much, upon occasions, it leads those who really possess it to do and to

¹ Gal. v. 6.

suffer; and then you will understand how it enriches the whole inner life, how powerfully it contributes to making man what he should be — in other words, to his justification.

III.

But, thirdly, the greatest service which faith renders us is this: it receives, at God's Hand, the Perfect Righteousness of Christ. Faith is itself a hand, which the soul extends towards heaven, or with which it grasps the Redeemer's Cross.

My brethren, that which really makes us what we should be is not in or of ourselves; it comes to us from without—from the Perfect and Sinless Being; and faith is the receptive faculty, or act, whereby the soul makes this prerogative gift of justification altogether its own.

St. Paul is never tired of asserting that man cannot be as he should be—that he cannot be just or righteous—without Jesus Christ. The Jew cannot: because, although he has a revealed Law from God, he does not keep it. The heathen cannot: he, too, has a natural law written in his heart, but he falls short of it. The heathen do not seem, so far as the Apostle's experience went, to have supposed that they were absolutely righteous. The Jews did go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the Righteousness of God. But the hard fact is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and therefore it is that justification, properly speaking, can only come to us from without. Faith itself would not justify; it would lack its elevating and productive power if it had not before it an Object utterly independent of human weakness and human sin, an Object Divine, Unchanging, Immaculate. We cannot raise ourselves from the dust; a moral law of gravitation

keeps the fallen race down ; we must be lifted, if at all, by a Hand reached out to us from above. If justified at all we must be justified freely by God's grace through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Yes, Christ Jesus, Who alone of those who have worn the human form, is as He should be, Whose life, public and secret, conforms perfectly to the absolute Rule of Right,—Christ Jesus the Beloved Son in Whom the All-Perfect is well pleased, is the source of justification to His brethren. He has done away with their imperfections, by bearing their sins in His own Body on the tree ; He has given them a share in His perfect obedience, in His transcendent and prevailing merits ; He is their Peace ; He is made to them Wisdom and Righteousness and Justification and Redemption. It is not that His Righteousness is credited to them by a fiction without being conveyed ; it is credited or imputed because it is already conveyed ; because in His generous love He consents to share it with the poorest and weakest of His brethren.

On His part this great gift, purchased in its completeness on His Cross, is conveyed by His Spirit and His Sacraments. His Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, because it is His work to make us partakers in the perfect Manhood of the Redeemer. And His Sacraments would have no place at all in a religion such as His, unless it were a place of the very first importance ; mere graceless forms would be intruders in a dispensation where forms and shadows have given place once for all to the Eternal Realities. It is through them, as channels, that He dispenses what He has won—nay, what He is. “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”¹ “The Bread that I give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”²

But, on our part, how are these treasures to be claimed ?

¹ Gal. iii. 27.

² St. John vi. 51.

How is the human soul to grasp this Righteousness of God in Christ? The answer is—By Faith. Faith is the hand which the soul extends in order to receive the gift of heaven. In the case of all adults it is indispensable. God may take infants up in His arms and bless them; the grace of Regeneration, like the gift of natural life, may be conferred on those who are unconscious of its greatness. But, as St. Augustine has said, He Who made us without ourselves, and Who regenerated us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves, without our conscious and deliberate acceptance of His salvation. And this acceptance of God's final gift is effected by faith. Faith is the spiritual act whereby the soul associates itself with the Perfect Moral Being, Jesus Christ; whereby it makes His Righteousness, His Obedience, His Sufferings, its own; whereby it lays strong hold upon His Cross, as on the source and warrant of its victory; whereby it draws from His Sacraments the redemptive virtue which He has lodged in them; whereby the sinner, penitent and self-renouncing, is forthwith clad in His garments of salvation, and covered with His robe of righteousness, and bidden sit down in heavenly places in the Eternal Father's home.

Yes, faith is the action of the awakened soul, consciously face to Face with its Redeemer, with its God. In a being capable of it, it is indispensable. Without faith there may be vigorous physical and mental life, but the spirit is dead. Faith raises us from the dust of earth; faith, the product of affection and of will, rouses will and affection to renewed activity. Above all, faith is the spirit of prayer; faith is ever a suppliant—an importunate suppliant—kneeling on the steps of the throne of heaven to receive, we may dare say to claim, for man the Perfections which man cannot himself command, and which alone can make him what he should be—the priceless gift of justification through Christ. “Verily, verily, I say unto you: he that

believeth on Me hath everlasting life.”¹ Let us rouse ourselves—before we leave this church—to beg God to give us in new measure this great and necessary grace, without which, as His Apostle has said, it is impossible to please Him. Now, as in bygone days, faith is given, it is strengthened, in answer to prayer. “Increase our faith:”² “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief:”³—these breathings of human souls, eighteen centuries ago, are not less powerful with God now than in the days of old; nor are the issues which depend upon their being answered less momentous, whether in time or eternity.

¹ St. John vi. 47.

² St. Luke xvii. 5.

³ St. Mark ix. 24.

largely copied out.

SERMON XIV.

THE MEASURE OF GRACE.¹

EPH. iv. 7.

Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

EVERYBODY will see at once why the passage from which these words are taken is chosen as the Epistle for St. Mark's Day. St. Paul is contrasting the unity of the Faith and Church of Christ with the different gifts bestowed on its members; and he traces the bestowal of these gifts to our Lord's Ascension. While our Lord remained on earth, St. John tells us, "the Spirit" (in this complete sense) "was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."² The Descent of the Holy Spirit was the first fruit of our Lord's Intercession. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."³ Among these gifts St. Paul names Evangelists. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ."⁴ It is the gift of Evangelists to the Church which specially connects this passage with the Festival of St. Mark. As St. Paul uses the word, an Evangelist does not mean simply a writer of one of the four Gospels. As would be implied from its position after the Apostles and Christian Prophets, and

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Fourth Sunday after Easter, St. Mark's Day, April 25, 1875.

² St. John vii. 39.

³ Eph. iv. 8.

⁴ *Ib.* 11, 12.

before pastors and teachers, the Evangelist was a connecting link between the founders of Churches and those who had the care of them when founded. The Evangelist of the earliest time was a travelling missionary, who completed what Apostles and Prophets had begun, and so handed on their work to settled pastors and teachers. These five different gifts and duties did not coincide with the different orders of the Apostolic ministry. Lay persons, like the daughters of Philip, had the gift of prophetic utterance; deacons, like Philip himself, were Evangelists; while bishops, like Timothy, who as such were pastors and teachers, were also "to do the work of an Evangelist," as upon occasion Apostles did it too. In short, the word "Evangelist" describes the actual doer of work of a particular kind, not a member of an order of workmen; and that work was especially the setting forth the good tidings of great joy—the Life, Work, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is easy to see how the word "Evangelist" came to mean, as it exclusively meant even in the sixth century, and predominantly long before, a writer of one of the four Gospels. For when the Apostolic Age was on the wane, and one by one the first builders and instructors of the Church, who had seen the Lord Jesus, began to be removed, a great anxiety would naturally have taken possession of many minds. How would the exact record of the Life of Christ be preserved, if the memory of those who heard the Apostles was alone to be trusted? Would not the first Christians forget some particulars of that Life? Would they not exaggerate others? Would not fancy and taste colour the narrative as time went on? Would it not grow, this narrative, under successive repetition, to the dimensions of a legend in which the imaginary and the true would be so subtly blended that it would be impossible, after a while, to say what belonged to each; and then, when a general

suspicion of untrustworthiness came to be attached to it, would it not be either reduced to a barren outline or rejected altogether?

It must have been in immediate deference to some such policy as this that, towards the close of the Apostolic Age, the Gospels were written—two of them by Apostles, and two of them under Apostolic direction, but by simple Evangelists. Although they necessarily cover much of the same ground, each writer treats our Lord's Life from a different point of view, and there is no real ground for supposing that any one of the narratives was modelled upon or reduced from any one of the others. They were each written, it would seem, independently, for particular Churches or sections of the Church, under a particular set of circumstances, which made it desirable to dwell on some aspect of the Life of our Lord. Thus St. Matthew seems to have written for the Jewish Church in its earlier days, when it was made up exclusively of Jewish converts; and therefore he dwells on the correspondence of our Lord's Life with Jewish prophecy, and on the regal character of His acts and words, as became King Messiah, although disguised beneath the form of a servant. St. Mark seems to have written at a later date. He has more in common with St. Matthew than with any other Evangelist. Like St. Matthew, he seems to think in Hebrew though he writes in Greek; but then he often uses Latin words, and carefully translates the Syro-Chaldee words which he quotes as used by our Lord, as was needed for Gentile readers. St. Luke wrote under St. Paul's guidance, for Gentile Churches alone, and he dwells on those portions of our Lord's teaching which illustrate the points on which St. Paul laid such especial stress, viz. the fitness of the Gospel for the whole human race, and the pardoning and healing virtue of the Redeemer's Work. Many years after St. John wrote for those Churches in the Lesser Asia which

had come into contact with the Alexandrian Jewish philosophy. One of the prominent features of that philosophy was its doctrine of the Reason or Word of God, a doctrine which connected the best teaching of the Greeks with some portion of the mind of the Old Testament Scriptures. St. John's object is to show that these several lines of thought pointed to and were satisfied by the truth of our Lord's Eternal, Pre-existent Nature. The motto of his Gospel is, "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His Name."¹ Thus each Evangelist had a separate set of readers in view, although dealing with the same great subject; and their common motto might well be the words of St. Paul: "Unto every one of us is given grace," for our several lines of work, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

I.

The text leads us, first of all, to reflect upon the often-repeated but often-forgotten truth that we depend for our religious, as well as for our mental and physical life, upon the Source of all good. "Unto every one of us is given" whatever we have. We English people, self-reliant and energetic as we are, are, it has been said, half Pelagians by our natural disposition; [we make much of the maxim that "God helps those who help themselves." That maxim is true, if it be only meant that God's assistance does not dispense us from the duty of exerting ourselves, of making the most of His gifts, of co-operating with His grace. But it is untrue if it be intended to insinuate that if we succeed, success is really due, due

¹ St. John xx. 31.

entirely, to our own exertions.} A great German writer, Schleiermacher, has said that religion consists entirely in the recognition of our dependence upon God;¹ and, although that may be an exaggerated statement, it is only the exaggeration of a great truth, which is not less a truth because exaggerated. {If religion does not entirely consist in this acknowledgment of dependence, it does so very largely; "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,"² is a first principle in all really religious thought. This is as true of the gifts of nature, as we term them, as of the gifts of grace. Even those gifts which are secured by our own labour, are influenced by causes so beyond our control that in conquering our prize we are reminded of our dependence. Health is a gift of God from moment to moment; we may do much for it by observing the laws which protract life, but the fundamental causes which secure or destroy it are quite out of our reach.} Already, it may be, the strongest man in this cathedral carries within him the secret unsuspected mischief that will in time display itself as fatal disease, and will lay him in his coffin. {Property, again, is literally a gift, even though a man may have earned every sixpence he has. The opportunities that offered themselves in business, and the strength and wit which enabled him to make good use of those opportunities, were just as much beyond his control—just as much gifts, as the weather. Then when wealth has been acquired, it is continued as a gift. The best farming in the world cannot command a harvest, unless the rain and the sunshine do their part; and the rain and the sunshine might be better understood, but they will not be controlled in the slightest degree when we have brought, if we ever do bring, our weather-cycles to mathematical perfection. Moreover, as the world has grown richer, the tenure of a

¹ Schleiermacher, "Christliche Glaube," i. pp. 6-14, 16. ² St. James i. 17.

great deal of wealth has become more artificial, and, consequently, more insecure. How many private families depend for that income which secures their daily bread on a vast variety of social and political events in all quarters of the globe! The savings of a small business, which some centuries ago would have been laid out on property which the owner could have looked over every day for himself, are now perhaps forfeited by the failure of a firm at the antipodes. Mind, again, in its highest form, that of genius, is most conscious of its dependence. Perseverance and labour can do much—they can do almost everything in the way of acquiring materials for discussion and thought (although they depend largely on health); but the enthusiasm which kindles thought and speech, the rapid perception of principles which underlie appearances, the flashes of light which can neither be bespoken nor detained, but which quicken and harmonize what else was a dull and shapeless mass,—whence come they? And this applies not less to our religious life. Although man cannot be religious against his will, or without his deliberate co-operation, the force which helps him to maintain communion with God comes from without him—it is a grace freely given; and this is not less true of those endowments which are a religious benefit to others.)

In the case of the Evangelists, it is clear that, however we define the precise assistance which they received, they must have been assisted. If we except St. Luke, they were all uneducated men, yet they have produced narratives, the simple beauty of which, apart from all questions of religious authority, has commanded the admiration of the acknowledged chiefs of literature. Rousseau's words are well known; and Rousseau is only one of a company of sceptical or semi-sceptical writers who have discussed with enthusiasm and wonder the beauties of the Gospels. These beauties are most

naturally explained if we understand that each Evangelist received the grace which was needed for his particular work, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. This grace consisted, partly, in certain opportunities of becoming acquainted with the facts, and partly in an inward guidance, teaching him how to select and arrange his materials.

II.

Let us trace this in the case of St. Mark the Evangelist.

First, what were his opportunities? He was by birth a native of Jerusalem; he bore at first only the Jewish name, John; like Saul of Tarsus, he took a Roman name, Mark, in later life. He was cousin to Barnabas, the companion of St. Paul; and his mother Mary's house in Jerusalem seems to have been a frequent home for the Apostle Peter. Probably during one of the Apostle's visits, the young John Mark was converted to the Faith, although there is no reason for thinking that this can have been before the Crucifixion, or that this Evangelist was ever one of the seventy disciples. It seems almost certain that an incident which he alone has recorded refers to himself, and that, from reasons which weighed with St. Luke and St. John on like occasions, he suppressed his name. On the night of our Lord's betrayal and arrest, Mark must have been in some house in the valley of the Kedron, and was either awakened out of his sleep or just retiring. It is difficult to say exactly what exact knowledge of our Lord's teaching and claims he had at this time arrived at; but his interest in the fate of the great Teacher led him, without waiting to dress himself in the usual way, to follow the crowd into the city, "having a linen cloth cast about his naked body." He attracted attention by his sympathy with the now unpopular

Prophet of Nazareth, and was on the point of being arrested; "the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked."¹ Thus St. Mark, without wishing to obtrude himself, tells us that at this period of his life fear was a stronger motive with him than natural shame. Then we lose sight of him until, in St. Paul's first missionary journey, we find him, not merely a convert, but an attendant Evangelist, accompanying that Apostle and his own cousin Barnabas as far as Perga, where, possibly from a wish to rejoin St. Peter in Palestine, he deserted St. Paul. After this St. Paul would not allow him to be a companion on the second journey; rather than do so he had a sharp contention with St. Barnabas. But when St. Paul was in chains at Rome, Mark was again at his side; and he was at Rome again somewhat later, when St. Peter wrote his first Epistle. Three months before St. Paul's death, Mark was with Timothy at Ephesus; and a later tradition connects him with the foundation of the Church of Alexandria.

Thus it appears that Mark occupied, on the whole, a very subordinate position in the early Church; he was not an Apostle, and he had not the influence which St. Luke's Greek culture gave him. But he had in life one commanding blessing—in his intimacy with St. Peter. His later life might seem to be divided between companionship with St. Peter and with St. Paul; but the contents of his Gospel, as well as the Church tradition about him, links him most closely to St. Peter. According to Clement of Alexandria, the hearers of Peter at Rome desired Mark, the follower of Peter, to leave them a report of his teaching, upon which Mark wrote his Gospel, which the Apostle afterwards sanctioned for use in the Churches. Tertullian calls St. Mark the interpreter of Peter; and the later references to the subject are of the same kind. And

¹ St. Mark xiv. 51, 52.

St. Mark's Gospel supplies us with some particulars about St. Peter which we do not learn from the others ; such, for instance, as his humble origin and his connection with Capernaum ; but, on the other hand, St. Peter's walking on the sea, the blessing pronounced on him after his confession of our Lord as Messiah, his part in preparing the Passover, and the bitterness of his grief after the scene in the hall of Caiaphas, are all omitted—doubtless in deference to the sensitive humility of the Apostle. St. Mark, then, had this great advantage, although he had never been a disciple of our Lord ;—he was, in later life, in the position of a private secretary to the first Apostle. Without this he never could have written at all. And, observe, he was not forced to make the most of this opportunity.

My brethren, to see greatness in those with whom we are intimate is a special gift ; it is often easier to see it in those whom we look at from a distance. The mountain is better appreciated by most men a hundred miles off than at its base, where all is foreshortened. St. Mark might easily have wasted those precious months or years in the trivialities of intercourse, instead of gathering from Peter's lips, with scrupulous care, all that he could hear of the Life of the Divine Redeemer. But, independently of this, the companionship of the Apostle would certainly not have alone sufficed. We shall see that St. Mark's workmanship is marked by characteristics which give evidence of his own particular endowment.

III.

{ St. Paul says that grace was given in the Apostolic Church according to the measure of the gift of Christ. With what purpose did the Ascended Christ measure out

His gifts to all and to each? For the perfecting of Christians; for the work of the ministry; for the building up of the Christian body, edification, spiritual improvement, the life of God in the soul; the organization and invigoration of the Church;—these were the objects with which such gifts were given. The vacillations and hesitations of religious childhood ought to be at an end, “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”¹ Christians were to have clearly in view the ideal life exhibited by our Lord, what the Apostle calls “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”² They were to grow up unto Him in all things, in all departments of activity and thought, as to the typical Head of the Church, and the Centre of its well-compacted unity. It was to secure this object that each gift, however humble, however magnificent, was really given.

The object, then, with which these gifts were given was a public one. They were not intended to increase the power or importance of those on whom they were bestowed. The receiver of such gifts was to be a trustee; he held them for the benefit of others. So it was with Apostles and Evangelists. The writers of the four Gospels achieved their work, not for the sake of making a literary reputation for themselves, or of adding to the literary masterpieces of the world, but for the benefit of the spiritual Christian Church.) Christ our Lord, sitting in the heavens, and seeing what had to be done; seeing what was wanted in the Apostolic Churches, and in the Church of all time; seeing what was wanted in the Evangelists themselves, if they were to supply the Church’s wants—measured out His gifts to the Evangelists accordingly; to each Evangelist that special gift which he needed in order to do his work. What was the especial grace that was given to St. Mark?

¹ Eph. iv. 14.

² Eph. iv. 13.

It has been said that St. Mark's Gospel has no special character, that it is the least original of the four, that it might have been dispensed with without loss to the evangelical narrative. Even St. Augustine speaks of it as an epitome of St. Matthew, and his deservedly great authority has obtained currency for this opinion in the Western Church. But, in point of fact, although St. Mark has more in common with St. Matthew than with any other Evangelist, he is far from being a mere epitomist of the first Gospel; he narrates at least three incidents which St. Matthew does not notice, and he has characteristics altogether his own. Let me mention two.

In the first place, St. Mark is remarkable for his great attention to subordinate details. He supplies many particulars which Evangelists who write more at length omit. From him, for instance, we learn the names of Jairus, the ruler of the Synagogue, and of Bartimæus the blind. From him we learn how Simon of Cyrene was related to well-known Christians of the next generation, Alexander and Rufus. He it is who tells us that the woman of Canaan, whose petition our Lord so indulgently received, was a Syro-Phœnician; and that our Lord Himself was popularly spoken of as "the Carpenter." He is careful to paint more minutely than do others the scenes in which our Lord took part. On four occasions he describes our Lord's look. He notes the expressed affections of our Lord's Human Soul; His love for the rich young man; His anger with the Pharisees; His pity for the leper; His groaning in spirit on two separate occasions. Much else might be quoted in illustration of this point; but St. Mark's love for minute and vivid detail will be best seen, if we compare his account of the Gadarene demoniac with that of the two other Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke. While their accounts of this afflicted maniac are comparatively brief, St. Mark explains that "no man could

bind him, no, not with chains; because that he had often been bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, crying, and cutting himself with stones.”¹ And it would be easy to add other illustrations to the same effect. Here, brethren, we have something more than a literary peculiarity—a style of writing which corresponds to those pre-Raphaelite artists who render every leaf and blade of grass with scrupulous accuracy. We are face to face with a moral excellence, which forms part of the special grace of St. Mark. Close attention to details, in any workman, means a recognition of the sacredness of fact; where details are lost sight of or blurred over in the attempt to produce large general effects, there is always a risk of indifference to the realities of truth. The least fact is sacred, whatever be its relative importance to other facts; but in a Life like that of our Lord, everything is necessarily glowing with interest, however trivial it might appear in any other connection. This care for details is thus the expression of a great grace—reverence for truth, reverence for every fragment of truth that touched the Human Life of the Son of God.

Secondly, St. Mark is remarkable among the Evangelists for the absence of a clearly discernible purpose in his Gospel, over and above that of furnishing a narrative of our Lord’s conflict with sin and evil during His Life as Man upon the earth. The other three Evangelists have, each of them, a manifest purpose in writing. St. Matthew wishes to show to the Jews that our Lord is the Messiah of Jewish prophecy; St. Luke would teach the Gentile Churches that He is the Redeemer, Whose saving power may be claimed through faith by the whole race of man;

¹ St. Mark v. 3-5.

St. John is throughout bent upon showing that He speaks and acts as the Eternal Word or Son of God, Who had been made Flesh, and was dwelling among us. And it has been said that St. Mark's narrative is an expansion of those words of St. Peter, how "Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good, and healing all that were possessed of the devil; for God was with Him."¹ Probably this is true; but then these words describe, not a purpose beyond the narrative, but the substance of the narrative itself. St. Mark records the Sacred Life as he had learnt it from the lips of St. Peter; not for any purpose beyond the narrative, not with any "tendency" (to use modern language on the subject) in the narrative, but because the narrative itself, whatever it might prove beyond itself, was unspeakably precious.

There are many minds in all generations—certainly there are many in our own—to whom such a Gospel addresses itself with peculiar force. Such persons are often unreasonable in their objections to a narrative which is also a doctrinal treatise, which has an historical or theological conclusion always in view. But our Lord, in His comprehensive indulgence, appears to have provided, in the second Gospel, for this form of mental fastidiousness or weakness, without necessarily condoning it. St. Mark writes the sacred history purely for its own sake; the gift of Christ which was measured out to him, while it keeps him in fundamental harmony with his colleagues, yet enables him to minister to a distinct class of minds.

A few words in conclusion.

[I. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." As no two human souls exactly resemble each other, so no two souls are endowed in an exactly similar manner. And for the

¹ Acts x. 38.

difference of endowments, let us be sure, there is always a reason in the Divine Mind. Each soul has its appointed work to do, without itself as well as within; and it is endowed with exactly the grace, whether of mind or heart, which will best enable it to do that work. Some may think that they have received little or nothing—some gift so small as to be scarcely appreciable. The probability is that they have not yet really considered what God has done for them; they have spent their time in thinking of what He has withheld instead of what He has given—of what they might have been instead of what they are.) Certainly the grace which our Lord gave to St. Paul when he wrote his great Epistle to the Romans was immensely greater than that which He gave to Tertius, the amanuensis, who took it down from the Apostle's dictation, and who inserts a greeting from himself just at the end.¹ Still, Tertius had his part in the work, a humble, but a very real part, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ." He did not say, "Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body;" he made the most of the grace which was his. And others may think, rightly or wrongly, that unto them very great graces have been given "according to the measure of the gift of Christ;" that they are the hand or the eyes of the Body of Christ; the men who do its work, or who discern the truths which support its life. Well, if it be so, this is a reason, not for confident satisfaction, but for anxiety. (Such gifts as these are edged tools, and may easily prove the ruin of their possessors. For all such gifts an account must one day be rendered; and if self has appropriated that which belongs to God or to His Church, it cannot but entail misery on the possessor. If a man has wealth, or ability, or station; much more, if he has cultivated intelligence and generous impulses; most of all, if his heart has been

¹ Rom. xvi. 22.

fired by the Love of God, and the Unseen is to him a serious reality, and he has hopes and motives which transcend the limits of the world of sense;—then, assuredly, his safety lies in remembering that he is a trustee, who will one day have to present his account at the Great Audit, when the eminence of his gifts will be the exact measure of his responsibility.

2. And if this should be the feeling of those who may have been largely endowed, what should be ours who witness their endowments? What but one of hearty thankfulness to God, Who has given such gifts to men? That clear head, that warm heart, that generous temper, that quick spiritual instinct belongs not merely to the immediate owner, but to the whole Body of which he is a member; it belongs to all of us. We, too, are enriched by his gifts; Christ has measured out that gift for the benefit of us all. There ought to be no place in the Church of Christ for the spirit of Korah and Dathan;¹ for the spirit of Simon Magus;² of the false teachers at Corinth;³ of Diotrephes in the Lesser Asia.⁴ If Apostles have gifts of government; if men of prophetic insight utter truth as they see it, with a force which reaches hearts; if Evangelists can make human language describe the Divine Life in humanity—so much the better for all of us. Such gifts from the nature of the case can only be shared by the few. “Are all Apostles? are all prophets? are all workers of miracles? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” When gifted people are withdrawn by death, we all feel their greatness, their claims upon us, their usefulness to us. We can afford, it seems, to be—I will not say generous, but just and equitable then, when they have left the stage of life, and their presence no longer suggests comparisons which wound our petty and irrational vanity. The

¹ Numb. xvi. 1-40.

² Acts viii. 18-23.

³ 1 Cor. i. 12.

⁴ 3 St. John 9.

difficulty, too often, is to do justice to the gifts which Christ has bestowed on them while they are still here.

And to-day suggests one particular application of the general lesson with which I shall conclude. St. Mark has long gone to reign somewhere beneath the Throne of Him Whose Life he has recorded ; but he has left us the result of his choicest gift : he has left us his Gospel. What has it, what have the other Gospels, hitherto done for us ? It is recorded that John Bowdler, an excellent Church of England layman of the last generation, stated on his death-bed that, on looking back on his life, the thing he most regretted was that he had not given more time to the careful study of the Life of our Lord in the Four Evangelists. Probably he has not been alone in that regret ; and, if the truth were told, many of us would have to confess that we spend much more thought and time upon the daily papers, which describe the follies and errors of the world, than on the records of that Matchless Life which was given for the world's redemption. The festival of an Evangelist ought to suggest a practical resolution, that, so far, as we are concerned, the grace which he received according to the measure of the gift of Christ shall not be lost. (Ten minutes a day, seriously spent on our knees with the Gospels in our hands, will do more to quicken faith, love, reverence, spiritual and moral power than we can easily think. " For the words of the Lord are pure words, even as the silver which from the earth is tried, and purified seven times in the fire." ¹ " More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is Thy servant taught, and in keeping of them there is great reward." ²

¹ Ps. xii. 7.

² Ps. xix. 10, 11.

SERMON XV.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH.¹

EPH. iv. 15.

That we may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.

HERE is a statement of the object, or of one of the objects, for which the Church of Christ had received her spiritual endowments from her Ascended Lord.

He gave some Apostles and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. His purpose, the Apostle tells us, was to bring Christians to moral and spiritual perfection; to advance the work for the sake of which the ministry had been instituted; to build up the fabric of the Christian life in the Church and in the soul. A time should be looked forward to when in the unity of the Faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, Christians would reach a perfection described as "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." That perfection would contrast sharply with their old pagan life, when uncertainty and division had been the order of the day; when they had been as children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. This new and higher life would be promoted by sincerity, governed by love, and its vital principle would be the "growing up unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."

So St. Paul wrote, more than thirty years after the

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Second Sunday after Easter, April 20, 1890.

Ascension ; but the aspiration, the hope, the effort which he thus describes would have taken some shape in Christian souls at an earlier time ; nay, immediately after the great events of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and even during the Forty Days which we are now traversing in memory. During those days our Lord was still lingering on the earth, and was seen from time to time by a few or by many of His faithful followers, but the old period of intimate and unbroken companionship which had preceded the Crucifixion had passed away. Memory can sometimes interpret events more accurately than present experience ; it sees them in their true proportion, as the traveller sees the higher Alps in their real grandeur, not from the valley at their feet, but from the distant plain. In those Forty Days the disciples of Christ would have understood the meaning of their Master's life better than when they were with Him day after day in the villages and fields of Galilee ; and now that He was preparing for His departure they would have discerned with increasing clearness, as to-day's Collect says, that He had been given not only to die as a Sacrifice for sin, but also to live as an Ensample of godly life—a model of what human life should be. They would have anticipated St. Paul's desire to "grow up unto Him in all things," as well as the prayer which we offer to-day, "that we may daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy Life."

I.

The most obvious truths are often most overlooked ; they do not provoke opposition, and the defence which opposition calls forth ; and as a consequence they are less before the minds of men than others which are much more disputable. If this were not the case it would be unnecessary to

observe that the first requisite for all good work is a good model. If a model does not exist it must be projected by the artist; before he touches his brush or his chisel, he must have clearly placed before his mind's eye, and perhaps outlined in pencil or shaped in clay, the conception to which he hopes to give lasting embodiment. Not to have a model is to waste time, skill, temper, material, in efforts which have no promise of even moderate success, or of anything better or other than pathetic failure and confusion. Even the Almighty Artist, when He made the world, beheld the archetypal forms of all to which He was giving existence in His Co-equal Wisdom, or Word, or Son; and no human workman, be he on a higher or a lower level in the school of production, can dispense with this first requisite—a model of that which he desires to achieve.

When from this it is inferred that the moral or spiritual artist needs a model no less than the architect, or painter, or sculptor, it will perhaps be objected that moral or spiritual success is a matter not of workmanship, but of growth. Each tree keeps close to the type of its species; the elm as it grows up has no model-elm before it, yet it does not wander away from its type into that of the oak or the beech; it grows, and lives, and dies an elm, and this, not in obedience to any outward model, but by the spontaneous prompting from within of the law of its life. And the Apostle, in the very words before us, speaks of the Christian life also as a growth—a comparison which, at first sight, might appear to do away with the need of an external model.

No metaphor, my brethren, can be pressed with impunity to warrant conclusions beyond its immediate purpose; and when St. Paul speaks of the Christian life as a growth, he does not forget that man is much more than a tree, that he is a being with a free, self-determining will. This will of man, both for good and evil, can very

largely modify the growth, whether of natural character and propensities, or of spiritual powers and endowments within him. Undoubtedly, the natural character which we inherit from our parents goes for a great deal. Much is said in our day, and with a large measure of substantial truth, about heredity, the transmission of a type of body, mind, and character, from father to son, from one to another generation of a race. But this transmission is always subject to modifications on the part of each individual; each separate will may mould into new varieties the type of life which has come from the parent stock. And it is the sense of this liability to variation, possibly for the worse, which makes each nation instinctively fix upon certain men who are held most perfectly to represent all that is best in it, as models for the imitation of those who are entering upon their share in its life. Every country in Europe—and England not less than others—has its representative men, its heroes, some of them numbered with the dead, some of them still tarrying among us, though their day of active labour may have passed; and, as we direct the attention of boys and young men to those great Englishmen, we say, “There, and there, and there, is a model, which in your measure, in your circumstances, according to your abilities, you should try to copy. Keep it before you, study the temper and characteristics which it offers, and you will not disgrace the country which has produced it—the England which is also your own.”

Indeed, most of us do for ourselves practically feel the need of a model; and the natural thing for a well-disposed boy is to make a model of his father. His father, he assumes, is a sample of what a man should be, a model ready-made and placed by Providence in his way, so that he has daily and hourly opportunities of studying it. A generous son will see nothing but good in his father; will

admit no deficiencies in him that he can help. Forty years ago, some friends were talking in Mr. John Keble's presence of the evils which pluralism—the holding by clergymen more benefices than one at a time—had in bygone generations inflicted on the Church. "I don't know," observed Mr. Keble, somewhat briskly; "my father was a pluralist, and he was not a bad sort of person:" the fact being that the old clergyman had at one time in his life held two very small cures at no great distance from each other. Certainly pluralism of this kind was no great harm; but what a serious consideration have we here for thoughtful parents; that a defective or bad example on their part may do mischief in the exact ratio of the trustfulness and dutifulness of their children. Have we not lately had one terrible sample of this brought home in the course of public justice to every one in the country; showing on a tragical scale that where a home is not ruled by love, where a father's life presents nothing to his children that can win their affections or command their respect, deeds are possible which make ordinary murder seem by comparison tame and almost venial—deeds which even the heathen would brand as the worst (since parricide most violently outrages the better teaching of unassisted human nature) that it is within the compass of human opportunity to achieve?

There is indeed a profound law of our nature which alone explains the immense importance of a pattern or model in life. Whether we will or not, we become like that which we admire. If our heroes should be men of ability but not men of principle; more intent upon personal credit or success, than upon the public advantage; more anxious to outwit opposition than to secure the triumph of what is right and just, we shall insensibly but surely become like them too. And if they are men whose first idea is to promote, so far as they can, the reign of

righteousness in themselves and among other men, amid whatever failures, and with whatever mistakes in detail as to what righteousness may imply or mean, we shall become, in our far-off measure, but to our great and lasting gain, like them too. In this matter we may adapt from another and much more solemn connection, those words of St. Paul, "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."¹

II.

A model, then, is a necessity in man's moral as well as in his artistic activities; and there are at least as many models as there are races of men, nations, callings in life, kinds of occupation. Is there any one model higher than these?—supreme, archetypal; a model not for men of one trade or art, but for men of all; not for one age, or country, or race, but for all; a model not only for Englishmen or Frenchmen, for Europeans or Asiatics, for the men of the old or of the modern world, but for all; a model for man as man, in gazing on whom, in admiring whom, in striving to imitate whom, man makes the very best he can of his manhood; gives scope and play to all in it that is highest and noblest, and carries it forward to those heights of excellence at which its real place in the universe, moral as well as material, is most clearly discerned?

Yes! the Apostle says there is such a Model—Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the Ideal Man. His Excellence is dwarfed by none of the limitations which make all other models less than universal in their value. Although a Jew, He belongs to all the races of the world; although a Peasant, He offers that which the greatest monarchs may

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 18.

do well to imitate; although untrained in school or university, His majestic Intelligence dwarfs down the wisdom of others to the relative rank of crude queries or scarcely disguised nonsense; although living on the earth eighteen centuries and more ago, He is not less a Model for the men of our day than for the men of His own. No one type of character or temperament has an unbalanced ascendancy in that Supreme Humanity, because all are represented, and all kept in their due place. With our finite capacities, we can, at the outside, only imitate Him piecemeal; and His servants from generation to generation have fixed, one on this, and another on that, feature of His Human Excellence in doing so. "I," exclaims one, "will copy His humility;" and another, "I, His charity;" and another, "I, His patience;" and another, "I, His self-denial;" and another, "I, His tenderness with those who misunderstood Him;" and another, "I, His zeal;" and another, "I, His compassion for suffering." And thus the rays of moral beauty, which centre in and proceed from the Sun of Righteousness, are distributed among His servants in varying measures of excellence: but all look up to Him; all know and feel and act upon the truth that He is the one Standard of human perfection; all say, with one voice, in endless chorus, "Let us, if we may, grow up unto Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ."

For beyond this there is another level of attainment, to which the Model offered us in our Lord invites us. I mean the perfect proportion and balance which He holds between what may appear to us to be incompatible forms of excellence. Ordinary goodness among men, as we may often observe, constantly means the practising one virtue at the cost of another; it seems incapable of keeping its eye upon the whole circle of excellences while endeavouring to excel in one particular.

In the Supreme Type of Goodness there is no such one-sidedness or lack of balance; in Him no excellence is ever stinted down by pressure into imperfect virtue, or exaggerated by impulse into something on the confines of vice. Thus, in our Lord, complete detachment from the ordinary interests and pleasures of the world was combined with an address and manners as far as possible removed from the ostentation of austerity: and His unrivalled dignity of character, based on and inseparable from His inevitable consciousness of greatness, did not check a perfectly simple and lowly bearing with all who approached Him. In Him there is no opposition between public duties and private attachments; no such compassion for the sinner as to involve even the semblance of indifference to sin; no such strong feelings about men or events as to imperil for a moment His perfect self-possession; no such calmness under opposition as to shade off into moral or intellectual lukewarmness about the Truth. The illustrations might be extended, but in those which I have suggested there is surely abundant material for attention and effort.

The Apostle, beyond doubt, has a high ambition when he writes of Christians growing up to Christ in all things. He would have the lofty type of excellence, the great formative principles, supplied by his Divine Master's Example, appropriated by Christians in every department of public and private activity. Politics, literature, art, should be Christian no less than domestic life and philanthropy and worship. As the Supreme Pattern, Christ has something to teach men in every ^{phase} district of human activity; and in every sphere of effort we are to aim at growing up unto Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ.

Music

III.

But here a difficulty is often interposed, which we cannot set aside without consideration, since of late years it has been insisted on with increasing pertinacity. We are reminded that, according to the creed of the Church of Christ, Christ our Lord is much more than Man; that He is the "Only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God." How, it is asked, can we imitate such a Being as is here described, even when He is made Man, and dwells on the earth in Human Form? We can imitate, it is urged, a perfectly good man who is merely a man; but if Christ is indeed so removed from us as the Church's belief implies, imitation is out of the question; the only possible attitude of the human soul towards Him is that of wonder and admiration.

Undoubtedly, my brethren, the Divinity of our Lord is the central article in the Faith of the Church; and before it can be modified the whole Gospel of St. John, and no inconsiderable portion of the writings of St. Paul, must be expelled from our Bibles. But does this Faith destroy the value of our Lord's Human Life as a model for our imitation? Those who say so appear to assume that imitation is only possible where the sphere of life and the range of interests and opportunities are strictly the same in the imitator and the model. This assumption would disqualify, not merely our Lord, but many good men and women for the office of an example to others. For instance, it is a matter of common remark that the Queen sets an example to her subjects of attention to domestic duties, of care for the suffering and the distressed, which we all of us might follow with great advantage; and, considering how far-reaching is the influence of the Throne in

a society such as ours, it is difficult to overrate the moral gain to the country of such an example. But supposing a person should object that the Queen lives in so totally different a sphere of life, has interests, occupations, an outlook so essentially unlike that of her subjects, that any real imitation of her in the particulars specified is out of the question—would not the objection be felt to be irrational? We may, indeed, be unable to copy the dealings of the Sovereign with her ministers, with foreign powers, with questions of the prerogative and the constitution: these things belong to an office with which she is, and we are not, entrusted; but she is not therefore beyond our imitation in the general principles of her conduct or in the sphere of duties which are common to her and to ourselves. And although the comparison is even infinitely below the purpose with which it is made, although the greatest of earthly monarchs is as nothing before the Majesty of the King of kings; still the analogy holds good thus far, that the value of an example is not forfeited by the fact that the being who offers it is in certain respects beyond the reach of imitation. Our Lord's true Divinity did not interfere with the truth of His Manhood; or lessen—nay, surely in some respects it enhanced—the value of the Example which He set us, from those early years of submission in the Holy Home at Nazareth to that solemn hour on the Cross when He commended His spirit to the Father.

Indeed, we may observe that excellence, like vice, is not a mere attribute of a living being, but a thing in itself, no matter who offers an example of it. A lie is a lie, whether uttered by the fallen archangel in Eden or by a child of six years old in his nursery. And humility is humility, whether it be practised by one of ourselves or by the Son of the Highest. Our Lord's Eternal Person does not make the virtues which are so apparent in His

earthly life inimitable by us; since they belong to that common nature which is ours by inheritance, and which in His love and condescension He took upon Himself. Certainly we cannot heal the sick, or still the tempest, or raise the dead; we cannot assume towards our brethren a bearing which implies that in us they will find inexhaustible resources of strength and consolation; we cannot die for the sins of the whole world, and rise again the third day, and ascend to heaven; but we can in our place and sphere, at an infinite distance, grow up towards the Love, of which those deeds of compassion and power were the magnificent expression: we can show the mind, if we cannot reproduce all the works, of our Divine Lord.

There is, then, no real speculative difficulty which bars our imitation of Him; but no doubt there are moral obstacles and motives which are wont to array themselves in intellectual finery, and with which we must grapple, if we would not utterly fail. Self-love in all its forms is constantly holding us back from growing up towards the standard of our Divine Head; and self-love must be conquered, if we would see things as they are, and be as He would have us.

In order to be practical, let us to-day fix our attention earnestly upon one very prominent excellence in our Lord's Human Example—an excellence about which, happily, there is no room for controversy, and which, if difficult of imitation, is imitable by all and incumbent upon all of us. I mean His superiority to injuries. Christians often cherish a spirit of retaliation and revenge, but they know that they are wrong in this, because Jesus Christ, both by precept and example, has told them so. But when our Lord appeared upon the earth, the right and duty of revenge for injuries was almost universally recognized; a few philosophers had timidly hinted that it might be a mistake, but no one had as yet taught man to

realize his true greatness by showing kindness and attention to opponents and persecutors, in imitation of the disinterested Providence of the Father in heaven. Our Lord's precept was, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father Which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."¹ And what He taught He practised, especially during His Passion, when no wrongs or insults could provoke Him to any act or word that was inconsistent with His universal charity, or could check or chill the prayer, "Father, forgive them."² As St. Peter reminds us in the Epistle for to-day, "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him That judgeth righteously."³

It has been thought that a special danger to Christians attaches to neglect of any human excellence that is specially prominent in our Lord's Earthly Life; and certainly the history of the early Church offers at least one illustration of how much may depend on the growing up to Jesus Christ in matters where there is no doubt about the force of His example or the possibility of imitating it.

Many of you probably know the well-authenticated history of Sapphirus. After the issue of the second edict against the Christians by the Emperor Valerian in the year of our Lord 258, Sapphirus, a Presbyter of Antioch of high character, was arrested, and brought before the Imperial legate. The usual questions were asked and answered. "What is thy name?" "Sapphirus." "Of what family art thou?" "I am a Christian." "Art thou a priest or a layman?" "I am of the order of a Presbyter." "Very

¹ St. Matt. v. 44, 45.

² St. Luke xxiii. 34.

³ 1 St. Pet. ii. 23.

well; our august lords, Valerian and Gallienus, have ordered that all who call themselves Christians should sacrifice to the immortal gods; if any despise this edict, he is to be tortured, and put to a cruel death." "We Christians," answered Sapricius, "have for our king Christ Who is God. He is the only true God, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea and all that is therein; the gods of the nations are evil spirits." Sapricius was then put to the torture; and when he had endured this with great patience, he was taken away to be beheaded.

As he was on his way to execution, a Christian, Nicephorus, rushed forward and fell at his feet. Between him and Sapricius there had been a dispute over some trifle, followed by a coolness; and Nicephorus felt that he must win, if he could, forgiveness from and reconciliation with Sapricius, while there was time. "Martyr of Christ," he cried, "forgive me, for I have wronged thee." Sapricius did not reply. A little further on, Nicephorus repeated his request. Sapricius still took no notice of him. The pagans asked Nicephorus what he expected to get from a fool who was on his way to a well-deserved punishment. But Nicephorus renewed his prayer, even when the place of execution had been reached; and still Sapricius was inexorable. He still maintained his persistent silence.

Then ensued a scene which struck all the spectators with astonishment; the Christians with awe. It seemed as if Sapricius, who had not flinched under the torture, was growing paler at beholding the sword of the executioner. "Kneel down," said the lictors, "to be beheaded." "Why should I?" said Sapricius. "Because," said they, "thou hast refused to sacrifice to the gods, and hast despised the edict of the Emperors, Valerian and Gallienus." "Don't strike me," cried the unhappy Sapricius; "I obey the Emperors; I will sacrifice." Once more Nicephorus rushed forward, and this time to implore

Sapricius not to lose the heavenly crown, which was already well-nigh won by so much previous agony. But it was all in vain. "Then," said Nicephorus, "I will take his place; tell the legate that I am a Christian;" and he was forthwith taken at his word. . . . This history sank deep into the mind of the ancient Church. The fall of Sapricius was quoted to show that the greatest of all sacrifices which a man can offer—the sacrifice of his life—is not accepted on high, when offered by those who have not learnt from Jesus Christ how to pardon injuries.¹

That attainment to the standard set before us by our Lord in His human life is wholly impossible without aid from God, is a truth of which those persons will be most surely convinced who have endeavoured to achieve it. "Without Me ye can do nothing,"² is a word from heaven that is ever sounding in their ears. "Christ in you is the hope of glory,"³ not only of heavenly glory after death, but also of the moral and spiritual glory which is possible here on earth. By His Spirit, and His Sacraments, our Lord takes up His abode in the soul and body of a Christian, and makes him what, left to his own natural resources, he never could be. If in the Church of Christ men have been not merely moral but holy; not merely courageous and faithful and sober, but also humble and self-sacrificing and unworldly;—this is because a higher Force has taken possession of them, and has made them what of themselves they could not be. If you would grow up unto Christ, pray for a larger outpouring in your soul of His Holy Spirit; make frequent and devout use of His Sacraments and means of grace; and be sure that what is impossible for man is possible with God. But as

¹ "Acta Sanctorum," February, vol. ii. p. 283 *sqq.* Fleury's "Hist. Eccles.," ii. p. 334.

² St. John xv. 5.

³ Col. i. 27.

you grow, remember that you are also free agents; keep your eye upon the Great Model. "There is one thing," said John Bowdler, an excellent layman of the Church of England in the last generation, when he was on his death-bed—"there is one thing that I regret more than any other in my past life, and that is, that I have not always set before me, every morning, some one saying or action of our Lord Jesus Christ for my guidance and imitation throughout the day."

Certain it is that as time passes, whether we will or not, we are growing, in some sense, and up to something. Neither the soul nor the body of man is ever stationary. It is said that within seven years the whole substance of a man's body changes, by the mere processes of exhaustion and nutrition. And who that watches what goes on in that more important part of his being, the soul, can be insensible to the changes, many and profound, that surely come with the lapse of time? Neither feeling nor thought are ever stationary; growth and decay are always in progress; but the vital question is what it is that is decaying and what it is that grows. Is it what the Apostle calls, epigrammatically, "the old man" that is decaying, or is it "the new"? Is it "the new man created after God in righteousness and true holiness"¹ who is growing, or is it the old? A vital question, most assuredly, for us all, especially as life draws on towards its close, and the day approaches when the result of all such growth and change here will become fixed and unalterable.

"Surely the time is short:
 Endless the task and art
 To brighten for the ethereal court
 A soiled earth-drudging heart.
 But He, the dread Proclaimer of that hour,
 Is pledged to thee in Love, as to thy foes in Power."²

¹ Eph. iv. 22, 24.

² Keble, "Lyra Apostolica," xvii.

SERMON XVI.

THE STRUGGLE WITH EVIL.¹

EPH. vi. 12, 13.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day.

ST. PAUL lay in prison at Rome, as he himself says, “bound with a chain, for the hope of Israel,” to the Roman trooper who watched him day and night. He employed his prison hours by writing, first to the Asiatic Churches at Ephesus and Colossæ and to the Christian slave-master Philemon, and, at a somewhat later date, to the Macedonian Church of Philippi. It was very natural that his language, like his thoughts, should be coloured here and there by the objects around him, and we find that while writing this Epistle to the Ephesians, his eye had been resting on the soldier to whom he was chained. In the outfit of the Roman legionary he saw the symbol of the supernatural dress which befits a Christian soul. The ornamented girdle, or balteus bound around the loins, to which the sword was commonly attached, seemed to the Apostle to recall that inward practical acknowledgment of truth which is the first necessity in the Christian character. The metal breast-

¹ Preached at Christ Church, Woburn Square, London, for St. George's, Bloomsbury, Restoration Fund, on the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity, October 29, 1871.

plate suggested the moral rectitude or righteousness which enables a man to confront the world. The strong military sandals spoke of readiness to march in the cause of that Gospel whose sum and substance was not war, but spiritual even more than social peace. And then the large oblong wooden shield, covered with hides, protecting well-nigh the whole body, reminded him of Christian faith, upon which the temptations of the evil one, like the ancient arrows tipped, as they often were, with inflammable substances, would light harmlessly, and lose their deadly point. And then the soldier's helmet, pointing upwards to the skies, was a natural figure of Christian hope directed towards a higher and better world; and the sword at his side, by which he won safety and victory in the day of battle—the one aggressive weapon which is mentioned—what was it but the spoken Thought or Word of God, which wins such victories on the battlefields of conscience, because it “pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,”¹ and which is thus, like its Object, “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?”² Thus girded, thus clad, thus shod, thus guarded, thus covered, thus armed, the Christian might well meet his foes. He was, indeed, more than a match for them, and might await their onset.

When a religion, such as that of Jesus Christ, came into the world, it addressed itself, as might almost indeed have been foretold, to two large classes of minds, in different ways. To one large class it presented itself as a new stock of striking and original truth—truth about God, truth about man, truth about the means whereby man may communicate with God. These minds would naturally ponder it over, step by step, statement by statement, doctrine by doctrine, incident by incident, comparing, inferring, hesitating, concluding, as the case might

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

² Rom. i. 16.

be. They were as those who watch the ocean, or who gaze into the sky; they were entranced, fascinated by the vision before them. Such pre-eminently was St. John—the first of contemplatives—to whom the Life of the Redeemer was a mirror in which to trace the attributes of the Infinite God.

To another class of minds the Gospel presented itself chiefly as a tremendous motive, or rather as a collection of motives, to practical activity of a new kind. If God had revealed His real Essential Nature; if He had taught man what He really was; if He had unveiled the true means of communication between Himself and man in Jesus Christ, this momentous fact could not be merely a matter for thought; it must be a motive to action. Minds of this cast felt that this vast body of light should be also of necessity heat and motion; that this accession to the highest human knowledge pointed to efforts of the heart and will, at least as clearly as to efforts of the religious intellect. Such was St. Paul, the Apostle of the Active life. Not that St. John, the great preacher of brotherly love, was indifferent to practice; not that St. Paul, the foremost herald and exponent of the power and capacities of a practical faith, was the enemy of contemplation. It is a question, not of the exclusive, but of the predominating tendency in these types of the Christian life; and St. Paul was predominantly practical.

What was the form under which St. Paul conceives Christian activity? St. Paul loved to think of the Christian life as of a military service.

Certainly the New Testament has other and familiar comparisons at hand; the Christian life is a commercial enterprise, as in the parable of the talents;¹ it is agricultural labour, as in St. Paul's description of his ministry among the Corinthians;² it is with the same

¹ St. Matt. xxv. 14-30.

² 1 Cor. ix. 1-11.

Apostle a contest for victory in the Greek games, only the crown to be won is incorruptible.¹ Of these comparisons the two first imply the truth that it consists in making the most, during our brief day of trial, of the stock of faculties and opportunities which God has given us; while the last implies effort, struggle, difficulty, if the end is to be secured. None of these metaphors, however, so fully expressed to the mind of St. Paul the complete reality as that of military service. At that age military effort was the most successful form of human activity. Rome had made herself, not quite a century before, the mistress of the civilized world, and this, not by her commerce, not by her diplomacy, but by her arms. In such an age, such a metaphor would have easily won the popular ear; but it would also have had attractions for the characteristic temper of the Apostle who employed it. The constant exposure to danger, the constant necessity for exertion, the generous indifference to personal suffering, the large-hearted sympathy with the experiences of every comrade, the sense of being only a unit in the vast organization of a serried host moving steadily forward, the instinct of discipline in complete harmony with the instincts of personal sincerity and courage—all of these features of a soldier's life made it welcome to the Apostle's conception of a Christian career and character. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."² "Quit you like men; be strong."³ "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life."⁴ The higher precepts of the army constantly occur in the Apostolic Epistles.

St. Paul does not discuss the theory of war; its antagonism to the real Mind of God, the true interests

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 24-27.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 3.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 4.

and ideal of human life; he takes it as a matter of fact in the world as it was nineteen centuries ago—as it is, alas! at this moment, and he consecrates its higher and loftier side by making it the shadow, not of Christian chivalry, but of the chivalry of Christian life.

The soldier differs from the merchant or the farmer, in that he has to deal with an antagonist; he differs from the racer at the games, in that his antagonist is not merely a competitor, but an enemy in good earnest. It was this which made the metaphor, in the Apostle's conception, so exactly correspondent to the actual facts, to the real case of Christian life. The Christian is not merely making the best of his materials; he is not merely engaged in a struggle for spiritual success; he is, before everything else, engaged in a stern and terrible struggle, and the forces arrayed against him are such as to oblige him to spare no exertion, to neglect no precaution, if he is to escape defeat.

What, then, are the antagonists to whom the Christian is opposed; and upon whom the Apostle fixes his eye in the passage before us?

Christianity, as you know, appeared upon the world just when the Roman Empire had all but attained its widest limits, and was consolidating its various provinces into a mighty whole. It might well have seemed the most stable and strong civilization that the world had witnessed. Never had there been so wide an intercourse between different races owning a single sway; never had all the knowledge, all the arts which make life beautiful and welcome been so widely diffused; never had it seemed so likely that the idea of humanity, the love of man as man, would presently emerge from, and control and silence the jealousies and separations which had hitherto kept races, classes, tribes, provinces, cities, families, at a distance from each other. Throughout the vast

Empire there was one official language; one theory and practice of administration; one animating and unifying idea, the greatness, or, as men spoke, the genius of Rome; there was less violence, less disorder, less human misery, over the surface of what was called the civilized world than there had been for centuries. Yet, as St. Paul looked out on this great society, with which he was personally linked by a privileged position of which he did not scruple to avail himself, he saw that in its principle and spirit, in its general tendency and action, it was not for God but against Him. It was, in Scripture language, the kingdom of this world.¹ Certainly, the Apostle inculcates strict obedience in civil matters to its authorities; every soul is to be subject to the higher powers,² since every power exists by the Divine warrant and commission. But the Apostle also knew that what in after years did happen would happen; that this society would find out the radical antagonism which parted it from the kingdom of Christ, and would act on the discovery. He knew from experience that the Jews were everywhere dispersed, and always ready to stir up a persecution; he knew that the superstitions of the lower orders of the Pagan populations might easily be inflamed to the point of cruelty and outrage against the disciples of Christ; he must have divined what was to be expected from the rulers of this society, invested with boundless power, and governed by motives of self-interest and passion—from tyrants such as Nero or Domitian—from statesmen like Trajan, or Decius, or Diocletian—from philosophers such as Marcus Aurelius. As of old, "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."³ The Prince of Peace had come; but ere His reign could be established, He had come, as He said Himself, to bring, not peace, but rather division.⁴ The

¹ Rev. xi. 15. ² Rom. xiii. 1. ³ Gal. iv. 29. ⁴ St. Luke xii. 51.

new society could expect no toleration until it was strong enough to make intolerance of its claim to live, an act of national suicide.

It was reasonable, then, to look forward, and St. Paul did look forward, to a great struggle between the Church and the Empire. It might be postponed; it might be deprecated, but it lay in the nature of things, and it must come at last. And to St. Paul's eye a struggle with the great Empire—with its vast forces, its vast prestige—cannot have seemed less than formidable. His practical genius cannot have underrated the real meaning of the undertaking "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."¹ He knew that the majority of men did not want to see it. He knew that he had to encounter prejudice and passion, exasperated to the point of violence, and armed with resistless force. He knew that he himself would have to stand before the tribunal of the Master of Thirty Legions; and he could not but have anticipated even then the final result.

Yet it was not these he mainly feared. We wrestle not, he said, against flesh and blood. Our visible and audible opponents, in the streets, in the synagogues, in the law courts, in the amphitheatres, are indeed human; if these were our only opponents, we should win easily. We wrestle, in truth, against principalities and powers—against beings and forces of another order, another order of intelligence, another order of existence. That which lies on the very surface of St. Paul's language is this momentous truth: that spiritual forces are much greater, much more efficient, much more formidable, than material ones. It takes time and trouble for many of us to be certain of this truth; because, from time to time in the world, events appear to contradict,

¹ Eph. iii. 9.

or, at least, to overcloud it. Yet, in the long run, it asserts itself, aye, infallibly. A strong will is a more formidable thing than a highly developed muscle; an idea which appeals, whether rightly or plausibly, to the intelligence and heart of the multitude is likely to do more work, and to wield a greater sway than battalions and parks of artillery. For the moment it may be otherwise; for the moment the material may silence the protests of mind, of conscience, of spirit. But in the long run it will not be so. The idea, especially if it be moderately substantial and true, will inflict itself upon the masters of the weapons which would destroy it. It is therefore in the encounter, not of brute force with conscience and thought, but of ideas with ideas, of wills with wills, that the destiny of the world is ultimately decided. They who aspire to rule, it has been said, in permanence, must contrive to base their throne not upon bayonets, but on convictions and on sympathies, on understandings and on hearts.

This is true in human matters. St. Paul knew that the Church had to contend with the thought and reason of Paganism much more than with its proconsuls and legions. But he did not mean human principalities and powers in writing to the Ephesians, since he contrasted those of which he is speaking with flesh and blood. It was a distinct and very solemn thought which he had in his mind, and which it behoves us well to consider.

No doubt in those earliest days of the Church at Ephesus, Christians must have often gazed with admiration at that splendid temple just beyond the city gates, whose real foundations our archæologists have quite lately been discovering, and which was reckoned, as all men know, one of the wonders of the world. It was in its beauty and majesty a type of the great empire, and its external form might well have won the admiration of

any cultivated beholder ; but, in the language of early Christendom, "they worshipped a devil within its walls." The bodily prostrations, the material sacrifices, the splendid ceremonial were but the outward sign of an inward and terrible reality ;—the prostration, the sacrifice, the devotion of the passions and the will which God had made for Himself, before a real power of evil, impure and strong. Just as a Psalmist had said of the Canaanites, that they sacrificed to devils and not to God,¹ so the Apostle had pointed out to the Corinthians that to partake in Pagan sacrifices was not merely to take part in an unmeaning and useless form, but that it was really to enter into communion with the powers of darkness : "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils."²

In the passage before us, there is an extension of this idea from the Pagan worship to the whole system and life of the empire—much after the fashion of the representations which we meet in the Apocalypse. Behind all that met the eye in daily life, St. Paul discovers another world which did not meet the eye, but which was, for him, at least, equally real. Behind the tranquillity, the order, the enjoyment of life, the widening intercourse, the maintenance of law with a certain amount of municipal and personal liberty, which distinguished the imperial régime, as a whole ; behind the tribunals of magistrates and the chairs of the philosophers ; behind the stately official ceremonies, and the rude popular festivities ; behind the fleets which swept the Mediterranean, and the legions which guarded the frontier on the Danube and the Euphrates ; behind all that spoke and acted in this vast and imposing system, all its seeming stability and all its seeming progress, St. Paul discerned other forms hovering, guiding, marshalling, arranging, inspiring that which met

¹ Ps. cvi. 36, 37.

² I Cor. x. 21.

the eye. "Do not let us deceive ourselves," he cried; "as if we had only to encounter so many social and political forces—so many human minds and wills, so many human errors, human prejudices, human traditions, human passions. Our real enemies are not human; they are in ambush behind; they are supersensuous. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Was this a misapprehension? a superstition? a phantasy born of too eager and excitable a temperament? or at best an accommodation—a pardonable employment of, a prudent concession to, a popular prejudice, which it was not worth while disputing? For those to whom St. Paul speaks as an Apostle of Christ, this question is already answered; they may well deem it impertinent. But for others, there are considerations at hand which are, at least, entitled to consideration. Does it not appear, philosophically speaking, a somewhat violent assumption to decide that man is really the highest being in the created universe, or at least that between man and his Maker, there are no gradations of intermediate life? Would it not be rather reasonable to suppose that that graduated series of living beings, graduated as it is so delicately, and which we trace from the lowest zoophytes up to man, does not stop abruptly with man; that it continues beyond, although we are unable to follow the invisible steps of the ascent? Surely the reasonable probabilities would incline this way; and Revelation does but confirm them when it discovers to our faith the hierarchies of the blessed Angels, and, as in this passage of Scripture, the correspondent gradations of evil spirits who have abused their freedom and are ceaselessly labouring to impair and destroy the true moral order of the universe. The two great departments of moral life among men are watched over, each one of them, beyond

the sphere of human life, by beings of greater power, greater intelligence, and greater intensity of purpose than man, in the world of spirits. These spiritual beings, good and evil, act upon humanity as clearly, as certainly, and as constantly, as man himself acts upon the lower creatures around him. And thus it is that we men "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Does not our experience, my brethren, bear this out, at least sometimes, in our darker hours? Have we never known what it is to be, as we phrase it, carried away by a sudden impulse, to be driven hither and thither, in conscious humiliation and shame, before some strong gust of passion? Have we never seen "another law in our members warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin that is in our members?"¹ What is this but to feel ourselves in the strong embrace and grip of another, who for the moment has overmastered us and holds us down? We may be unable to discern his form; we may be unable to define the precise limit or nature of his power; we may despair of deciding what it is that we supply out of our own funds of perverted passion, and what it is that he adds from the hot breath of a stronger and intenser furnace. But then the most ordinary processes of our vital functions defy analysis no less, however we may be certain of their reality. No, depend upon it, it is not any disposition, inseparable from the conditions of human thought, to personify and externalize passion which has peopled the Christian imagination with demons. As well might you say that the infectious epidemic, which has ravaged London this autumn, was a creation of human fancy; that it had itself no real existence; that it was the real cause of no disease

¹ Rom. vii. 23.

in individuals. Human imagination may do much; but there are limits to its activity; and the hard facts of Revelation are beyond it, as truly as the facts of nature.

For the contest of which St. Paul is thinking was not only to be waged in the sphere of history—on the great stage of those events which mould and govern the world. St. Paul is thinking of contests, humbler, less public, but certainly not less tragical, which are waged, sooner or later, with more or less intensity, around, within each human soul. It is within ourselves that we meet now, as the first Christians met, the onset of the principalities and powers. It is in resisting them, aye, at any cost; in driving them from us in the Name of Christ; in driving from us the spirits of untruthfulness and sloth, and anger, and impure desire, that we really contribute our little share to the great battle which rages, and will rage, between good and evil, until the End comes, and the combatants meet with their awards.

There are many to whom evil as such is not an object of abhorrence. They have no clear perception of its radical unlikeness to good; good and evil do not appear to them to belong to different spheres of being, but only to represent different points along the same line. In life, say they, good and evil are so strangely, so closely blended, that the sharp distinctions of the Gospel cannot be maintained in practice; and so they treat evil as if it were a wild beast which had been caught and tamed, and taught human manners, and had been made quite bearable, almost, if not quite, interesting.

And thus they lose all real love for, all real power of, appreciating goodness, sanctity. The two things go together; to love truth and righteousness, is to hate their contraries. This is constantly expressed in that 119th Psalm, which reveals almost more than any other part of

Scripture the inner movements of a life simply devoted to God. "Through Thy commandments I get understanding: therefore I hate all evil ways."¹ "I hate vain thoughts; but Thy Law do I love."² "Therefore hold I straight all Thy commandments; but all false ways I utterly abhor."³ "As for lies, I hate and abhor them; but Thy Law do I love."⁴ Accordingly, it is a mark of the man who has reached an advanced stage on the downward path: "Neither doth he abhor anything that is evil."⁵ This hatred of evil is, in fact, the reverse side of the soul's love of God, the Perfect Good: a hatred of evil as distinct from a hatred of those who do evil, and who are objects of sincere sorrow, and claimants on Christian charity. "Mine eyes run down with water, because men keep not Thy Law."⁶

It has been remarked by a keen observer that the easy tolerance of moral evil is one of the most alarming features of our day: it is one of those tendencies which sap the very springs of a civilization, which eat out the vigour and core of its life. We do not see its advance; it is in the air. It gilds the dangers around us with a deceptive beauty; it makes us easy and tolerant when it would be mercy to condemn; it makes us sensitive about being stiff and old-fashioned, and wanting in sympathy for new and striking ideas about morals; it makes us delight in moral paradoxes which startle pious persons of the generation which is passing away; it makes men talk of God as if He were all Benevolence, and in no sense Justice; it blinds men to the moral necessities which drew the Eternal Son down into our vale of tears to die as a propitiation for sin; it makes men turn away, almost with fierce anger, from God's Revelations respecting the eternal world, because those Revelations imply that He is irrecon-

¹ Ps. cxix, 104.² *Ib.* 113.³ *Ib.* 128.⁴ *Ib.* 163.⁵ *Ib.* xxxvi. 4.⁶ *Ib.* cxix. 136.

cilable with self-chosen evil. Thus it penetrates society and morals, and thus it debases the Faith which alone can save them. And when it has done its work in a class, a generation, a country—when it has softened and enervated all thought and resolution that should resist evil and should embrace sacrifice—then it has prepared the way for the ruin which awaits effeminate generations. It may be an enemy from without who gives the predestined shock; it may be a domestic revolution within; it may be some national misfortune which taxes the energies and devotion of all, and finds the majority wanting. The catastrophe may be indefinitely varied—the moral cause is ever at bottom the same.

Only when the struggle with evil is a matter of personal experience, do we hate it, and enter into the Apostle's language about its agents and champions. Only when at the feet of Him, Who, being the Moral Light of the World, was crucified for the sins of men, a man has felt and fought, inch by inch, against the subtle power of the tempter, does he see evil in its true light. "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore He saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."¹

And this it is which gives to the purpose of the collection which I am advocating to-day its true significance. You are restoring to its more popular use one of the handsomest parish churches in London; but your object, I apprehend, is no mere matter of æsthetic taste or parochial ambition. The alterations in St. George's, Bloomsbury, have been carried out in the simplest manner that was consistent with good workmanship. The church relies for its effect only on the beauty of its architecture; no attempt has been made to decorate it. But it has

¹ Eph. v. 13, 14.

been rearranged so as to secure to all its congregations the opportunity, which before they did not possess, of seeing and hearing the officiating clergy; and, above all, of kneeling reverently during prayer. None who has reflected how intimate is the link between the soul and the body; how much the spirit is governed for good or evil by the action of the body; how irreconcilable, as Burke pointed out, are certain bodily attitudes with certain moods of feeling and thought;—will despise this or think lightly of it. And the sum required for these alterations, inclusive of the items of warming, lighting, and rebuilding the organ, will be about £2250. To meet this expense £1650 is now in hand, which has been got together from all sources of income, only after the most strenuous exertions. There is, accordingly, a deficiency of £600; and I cannot but hope that an effort will be made to-day, in Christ's Name, to make up every farthing of it.

I say "in Christ's Name." For the restoration of a material church means what it means for us Christians because the true temple, the Body of Christ, finds its repose, its invigoration, within these consecrated walls—consecrated to promoting the highest well-being of men and the triumph of the Redeemer. Natural resources are all too poor to enable us to meet the enemies of our present and our eternal peace. It is in "the great congregation"¹ that enthusiasms are kindled, hearts are warmed, wills are braced for the great and increasing struggle with evil, which now, as in the Apostle's days, is the portion of the servants of Christ. Doubtless, this is not all; doubtless, in solitary moments—or rather hours—when no human eye is near, they who conquer wrestle in prayer for objects and against enemies all their own; and no public or corporate effort can supersede the need for this solitary heart-struggle. But the armour of God is surely

¹ Ps. xl. 10.

brightened, repaired, strengthened, in the assemblies of the faithful as nowhere else. To be lifted into a higher moral atmosphere, to be more eager for truth and righteousness, more zealous for the advance of Christ's kingdom, more certain of the truth of His Revelation, more secure while resting on His Word—how is this best effected but by coming to Him in these gatherings to which He has promised His Presence, by passing before Him in these reviews, so to call them, which He holds before the world, and before His Angels, in the temples of Christendom, in anticipation of the Judgment ; by kneeling publicly at His Feet as one of His redeemed family gathered before Him, that they may be washed by His cleansing Blood and purified and quickened by His Spirit, and fed with His heavenly Food ? There are thousands who know this from experience ; they know that there is moral power in the sense of being one of that company which meets here on earth, at the very gates of heaven, and which conquers the powers of darkness, because Christ supplies them with the whole armour of God. If I am addressing any such, let them think of others—of the happiness of making it one whit easier to others to conquer in a struggle which has been so full of danger and so irradiated by mercy for themselves.

SERMON XVII.

RELIGIOUS PROGRESS.¹

PHIL. iii. 13, 14.

This one thing I do: forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forward unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THIS is one of the passages in which St. Paul takes his readers into his confidence, and allows them to see how his public teaching was related to his own life and experience. This habit of his was due partly to his instinctive sympathy with the difficulties felt by others in understanding him; partly to the directness and simplicity of a noble character, which is unreserved and frank where lesser men would have an eye to appearances. It was, of course, very delightful for his hearers or readers; we all like to be allowed by a painter to see him in his studio, or to be admitted to inspect the library, manuscripts, and note-books of a great writer. St. Paul, in his generous way, again and again invites his readers to come behind the scenes, and survey his own spiritual life. Other confidences of the same kind are his allusion to the management of his conscience, in the speech before Felix;² or to his thorn in the flesh, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians;³ or to the marks of the Lord Jesus which he bore in his body, in his Epistle to the Galatians.⁴

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Third Sunday after Easter, April 26, 1885.

² Acts xxiv. 10-16.

³ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

⁴ Gal. vi. 17.

In the present case, he had just been describing the completeness of his self-surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him."¹ Would it not be natural for his Philippian readers here to think that their great master in spiritual truth must surely have already secured all that he had in view? They, no doubt, were still striving to make a few short steps in the Christian life; but the Apostle who could say, even years before, "I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,"² must surely, although here on earth, have attained the goal, and have entered on the secure possession of all that they, his converts, were hoping to make their own.

It is to correct this mistake that St. Paul states expressly that he, too, is still looking forward, still struggling, still in the position of any one of the flock which he had taught and fed; that effort, and not attainment, is and must be the motto of his life. "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forward to those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

"Forgetting those things that are behind"—"reaching forward to those things that are before." In these, as in other phrases of St. Paul, we seem to be listening, not to the language of eighteen centuries ago, but to the watch-words of our busy modern world. The modern idea of progress, in politics, in social science, in the world of thought, of art, of education, may be described as a

¹ Phil. iii. 8, 9.

² Gal. ii. 20.

“forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forward to those things that are before.”

What does this or that social or political reformer constantly impress on us? “Forget,” he says, “the things that are behind, the ideas which formed and cramped the minds of your ancestors; forget the institutions under which you grew up; the centuries which stretch back to the dawn of civilization; and look forward to the age which is now about to open. Before you is a land of promise, in which all will govern as well as be governed; in which wealth and education will be equally distributed; in which the diminished privilege of the few will secure a new birthright for the many.” And what says the apostle of intellectual progress? “Forget,” he says, “the things that are behind—the creeds in which you were brought up, the traditional atmosphere of thought that you have breathed in childhood, and inherited from the past; forget the philosophy, the history, the mental furniture, of the past, and look forward. We are entering on a new world of speculation, where all is aglow with unwonted light; and the human mind, which has done so much to understand itself and the universe in days gone by, is on the eve of conquests which will throw its past achievements into the shade.” Indeed, it is difficult to point to any department of human activity in which the idea of progress—not the less powerful because undefined and indefinite—has not great and increasing empire.

I.

This powerful idea, which we trace everywhere around us in the outward efforts and life of man, has its secret and explanation in the depths of man’s nature. Man has been created with a capacity for perfection, and, as a

consequence, he is always dreaming of or aspiring towards an ideal world which he does not yet possess.

The fancy of every child is haunted, however indistinctly, by pictures of a distant future, however impossible, towards which it fain must struggle; and the secret of this impulse to reach forward to what is or is supposed to be beautiful or perfect, is that He Who has made us for Himself has touched that infant soul with some ray or impress of His Eternal Beauty, and has provoked from it a responsive movement which thus seeks everywhere and in everything around it the Being Who thus draws it towards Himself. Even when man is wandering far away from God, the victim of all that is extravagant in speculation and degraded in conduct, he is constantly seeking One Who has left within his soul an indelible sense of His Charm and His Perfections, and Whom, like a blind-folded child, he feels for in quarters where the All-Perfect is least likely to be found.

Let us remark that this natural impatience of the present and the actual, this movement towards the unattained and the unknown, is characteristic of man. There is no reason to suppose that any lower animal is capable of it. An ideal which is beyond experience, which belongs to abstract thought, however tentative and elementary, implies a conscious, reflective spirit like that of man, not a mere sentient life like that of the lower creatures. No animal is haunted by an ideal; no animal, therefore, is capable of progress. It lives from moment to moment between a past which it has altogether forgotten unless some association should flash fragments of it upon the sluggish consciousness, and a future which it cannot and does not anticipate; but man, however unworthy or degraded his ideals of a future from time to time may be, is constantly cherishing and pursuing them—aye, even though they be very will-o'-the-wisps, which lead him

through the surrounding fog to the edge of a morass or a precipice where he will forfeit his life.

Indeed, when we talk as freely as we do of progress as the characteristic of our day, it is necessary to ask two questions about it; and, first of all—"What is the subject of such progress? What is it that is progressing?" Great numbers of people, if they were cross-questioned as to what they mean by "progress," would have to reply, or would find out upon self-investigation, that they only mean improved methods of manipulating matter. You go down, for instance, to a country town, and you fall in with a friend who walks you round the place—"just to show," as he says, "how we have been getting on since you were here five and twenty years ago." "Look," he says, "at that street; it is twice as broad as it was, and it has been rebuilt. Come into this manufactory, and take note of this patent machine; it has enabled us to undersell all the rival firms elsewhere, and to spend a great deal of money in improving the homes of the work-people. Then we are now on a line of railway, which brings us within five hours of London. And the telegraph has placed us in communication with all the world: we know every morning how the money market stands in Paris and Berlin, as well as in London. Our town hall, you will observe, is really a fine building; it cost an immense sum of money—at least, so we thought; but we are only waiting to profit by the experience of a few large buildings elsewhere, to light it with the electric light, and then we flatter ourselves that it will be superior to anything in this part of England. You would hardly suppose, indeed," he continues, "that this was the same place that you visited a quarter of a century ago. Certainly, the old Church is there, much as it was, with its weathercock on the tower, and the brick almshouses hard by; but, in other respects, everything has changed—life here is a totally different

thing from what it was." The fact is, we live in an age which, beyond any preceding age of which we have record, is an age of progress.

My brethren, material and industrial progress is a blessing. We have only to cast our eyes on those countries and races to which it is denied, to understand how much we owe to the Giver of all good for the share in it which, especially during the last half-century, He has granted to us. It is a blessing for this reason, among and above others, that, if rightly appreciated and rightly employed, it may pave the way for a higher progress than itself—a moral and spiritual progress. It would ill become the Church of Christ to ignore all that she owes to the steamship, to the railroad, to the electric telegraph; they become in various ways, as do the ruder forces of nature, His messengers "Who maketh the clouds His chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind;"¹ through them the sound of Apostolic voices has gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world. But does man's progress, in manipulating matter, of itself do anything for the real progress of man? What is man? You say he is a very accomplished and experienced animal; but is he nothing more? Do you reckon your limbs, your bodies, nay, your brains, as indeed yourselves? No, the true self is beyond these; it is beyond the material form which it measures, and pushes about, and treats as a very good servant or companion, but as nothing more. Man, in the inmost recesses of his being, is not anything that we can see; he is that principle which thinks, and is conscious that it thinks; which resolves, and remembers what it has resolved and thought; in utter independence of the material case or instrument which it carries about with it and calls a body. This, the higher and spiritual side of man's nature, is the real seat of his being, the

¹ Ps. civ. 3.

only part of it which is inaccessible to the assault of death ; and a progress which is wholly outside it, and only concerned with the material world, is not, properly speaking, the progress of man.

Nay, more. If material progress be unaccompanied by something higher—by moral progress—it may be bought at too dear a price. It may kill the workman in order to enrich the master ; it may impoverish the blood and sap the strength of a population by the employment of young children and by late hours of work ; it may, in the midst of its machinery, treat man himself as a machine, warranted to add to its products and to enhance its profits, while deprived of the time and freedom that are needful for the well-being of the intelligence, the heart, and the soul. And thus it may crush out from among artisan or working populations all the higher sentiments of love and obedience and respect, and may sow widespread the seeds of discontent and hatred, and make ready the way for some preacher of a general confiscation of property, who disguises the sophisms or the immoralities of his theory by parading the wrongs—alas ! the undeniable wrongs—which material progress, divorced from Christian motive, too surely and readily inflicts.

Surely we have facts enough around us to teach us, if we will, that material progress alone does not necessarily secure the safety even of material civilization. What more striking illustration of man's triumph over matter, by combining its occult forces, is to be found than in the dynamite which proclaimed to us last Thursday,¹ as it has too often of late before, that it places whatever is most associated with that which is venerable in the past or useful in the present, at the mercy of any form of discontent or ill temper that cares to express itself in acts of violence ?

¹ The reference is to an explosion at the Admiralty Offices, Whitehall, on April 23rd, 1885.

And at this moment, are not the arsenals of Europe, and of this country in particular, resounding with the din of preparation for possible war? And do not our public prints tell us day by day of the splendid and costly machinery for destroying human life, which are among the most skilled triumphs of our material progress? Ah! what have these triumphs of our skill achieved, save this—that they have made the unregenerate passions of mankind more formidable than they were in ruder times; that they have endowed the tiger within all of us with stronger jaws and sharper claws than he had in preceding centuries? What, it may be asked, is the gain of a material progress, if it stands alone, that has thus armed great nations to the teeth for a conflict which, if unhappily it should break out, would probably be more widespread and ferocious than any of its predecessors; while no higher progress, it might seem, is, for the moment, strong enough to awe the foul spirits of provocation and suspicion and revenge into the silence which becomes them, and to say to the rising tempest, “Peace, be still”?

II.

Material progress, then—the progress of something outside man, an improved material civilization, unaccompanied by any other, is to humanity what a new great coat is to a man who yet may have a heart-disease. But what of mental progress? Surely the mind belongs to the man himself; and if it be on the high-road of improvement, may we not rightly speak of its progress as the progress of man? And we certainly live in a day when this sort of progress has made enormous strides. We live in a day of Education Acts, and School Boards, and University Commissions; when education is a profession, and when all the apparatus of learning has a pomp and

publicity unknown before. Here, too, people are forgetting those things that are behind, and looking forward to those things that are before. Old subjects and methods are being more and more discarded; the dead languages are being thrown aside for special subjects, a knowledge of which may be turned to immediate account; the acquisition of useful knowledge, as distinct from the training of the mental faculties, seems to be the watchword of our modern education, and to rouse in its behalf widespread enthusiasm. Whether it is all real progress from a worse to a better educational method may, perhaps, be doubted. A man who had as much as any one to do with destroying the older educational methods of Oxford, thus describes the result:—

“The sudden withdrawal,” he says, “of all reverence for the past has generated a type of intellect which is not only offensive to taste, but is unsound as training. The young Oxford, which our present system tends to turn out, is a mental form which cannot be regarded with complacency by any one who judges our education, not by its programme, but by its pupils. Our young men are not trained: they are only filled with propositions of which they have never learnt the inductive basis. From showy lectures, from manuals, from attractive periodicals, the youth is put in possession of ready-made opinions on every conceivable subject: a crude mass of matter, which he is taught to regard as real knowledge. Swollen with this puffy and unwholesome diet, he goes forth into the world, regarding himself, like the infant in the nursery, as the centre of all things, the measure of the universe.”¹

It is not for me to discuss the exact measure of truth which there may or may not be in the cynical picture thus drawn by the late Mr. Pattison; it cannot, at any rate, be said to be inspired by any reactionary sympathies,

¹ The Rev. Mark Pattison's "Memoir," pp. 240, 241.

and it seems to show at least as much as this—that all change and movement in the world of thought and education is not necessarily to be considered progress. But there is a much deeper question to be asked and answered, before we can be sure that any improvements in education, any wider popularization of knowledge, really deserves the name.

My brethren, we have seen that a merely material progress is apt to fail, because it ignores the true seat of man's being; because it is only progress in the manipulation of surrounding matter, instead of progressive improvement of the man himself; and a merely mental progress may fail no less surely, because it ignores the true greatness of man's being, his true end and destiny. Why are we here? What are we looking forward to? What are we living for? If it be answered that all ends at death, then only such thought and knowledge as makes the few years of our existence more tolerable than they would be without it is worth accumulating, and progress in such accumulation is our true progress. But if there be a hereafter, then most assuredly all knowledge that reveals its nature and enables us to prepare for it is of the greatest value; and we make progress in the proportion in which we master and act upon such knowledge.

Half a century ago there was a Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge, which was understood to be, in some sense at least, opposed to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The title assumed that there was some sort of contrast between Christianity and utility; as though Christianity belonged to an ideal or fancy world, while knowledge that was really useful would confine itself to subjects belonging to the present scene of human life. There is no reason, so far as I know, to believe that all or most of the founders of the Useful Knowledge Society denied the existence of a future life;

but, like others who do not disbelieve it, they used public language which might seem to imply that they did. To call knowledge which bears upon this life only, exclusively or eminently Useful Knowledge, is to beg a very large question. If there be a future world, in which is a heaven and a hell, any knowledge which enables us to prepare for it is eminently useful, much more useful than that which only enables us to make the most of this passing world of sense and time. No manual of history, or geography, or grammar, or technical knowledge of any subject, is in reality so deserving of the title of "Useful knowledge," as is the New Testament; since the New Testament takes account of man's real destiny and being, whereas those manuals, excellent as they are in their way, provide only for a fragment of a very transient phase of man's present needs and experience.

This, then, obliges us apparently to think that much of the intellectual progress of our time is not real human progress. It is not, because it does not do justice to man as a being who does not cease to exist at death. If children were taught at a school only such subjects as they would understand up to the age of twelve or fourteen, on the supposition (if it could be entertained) that they would never grow older or never grow up, it would be, to say the least, a very imperfect and stunted education. And if a being who is to live throughout eternity is to learn while here only the subjects which will be useful during the fifty, or sixty, or eighty years of time, such an education is not entitled to the name of progress, since it fails altogether to satisfy the true conditions and exigencies of human existence.

III.

The true progress of man, then, is the progress of man himself, and not of something outside him, such as the material civilization which encases his life. And it is the progress of man as man, that is to say, of a being who, once coming into existence, must live for ever. This is a progress which embraces all man's faculties, his understanding no less than his heart and will; the understanding pursuing an increasing knowledge of the highest truth, while the heart and will are devoted to the attainment of the highest good. For the true mental progress of man is inseparable from his moral progress. A man may be very well informed in certain departments of information, and very clever and acute, without being a good man. But for true mental progress, for a comprehensive and balanced estimate of truth as a whole, principle—that is to say, goodness—formulating thought, is necessary. Without goodness, the understanding instinctively turns away its gaze from all truths, however true they may be, that have a moral bearing or obligation. When once the soul has deliberately rejected goodness, it has broken the link which joined it—I do not say to cleverness—but to truth; the love of truth and the love of goodness go hand-in-hand. You cannot impair your rectitude of action without injuring the clearness of your mental vision; you cannot do a deliberate wrong to virtue without discovering that much has been lost in that balance and harmony which is essential to the due appreciation of truth. “If any man will do His Will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God,”¹ is a principle of wide application.

¹ St. John vii. 17.

Man's true progress, then, is progress in that which belongs to his real self, and which will therefore survive the shock of death. It is such as St. Peter is thinking of when he bids Christians "add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."¹ It is in St. Paul's eye as he points the Ephesians to a time "when we may all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" when "we may grow up unto Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ."² It is commanded by our Lord, in such momentous sayings as, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect."³ It is progress in faith, hope, love; in humility, truthfulness, courage, purity; it means more prayer, more self-mastery, more repression of self, more care and thought for others. These things mean the progress of man himself; they imply moral habits which will last beyond the gate of death.

There are two enemies to this, the true progress of man.

I. One is a commonplace but dangerous enemy, the vice of spiritual sloth. It is not so much an affair of temperament as of motive. Sloth is only possible where there is no motive power at work in the soul, such as the love of God. The love of God is the principle of spiritual progress; it is always dissatisfied with past or present attainments, always pressing forward to something that has not yet been reached. Where the faculties of the soul are not impelled by this heavenly force, they do not lie idle for nothing. The field which is not tilled is soon covered with weeds and thistles. "The devil," says an old writer, "is like those birds who build their nests

¹ 2 St. Peter i. 5-7.

² Eph. iv. 13, 15.

³ St. Matt. v. 48.

in a disused windmill; the idle wings of a slothful soul are certain to attract him." Spiritual force which is not turned to account is like a fur coat laid up in a cupboard; it is certain before long to breed some sort of vermin in the moral sense.

2. The other enemy to spiritual progress is an erroneous idea of being in a position of spiritual privilege which makes progress and effort unnecessary. This is sometimes very mistakenly supposed to be an effect of belief in the grace of Baptism. That grace is a seed deposited in the soul, and requiring cultivation; it is a gift which is not given unconditionally; it may be forfeited, it may be sinned away. The knowledge that we are in possession of an endowment which is capable of great development, but which may, through carelessness, be lost, is surely a stimulus to effort, not a moral soporific. On the other hand, there is a state of mind to which this objection does apply—that of persons who, having experienced a great spiritual change, feel that everything has been done for them by God's grace, and think that they do a certain homage to His mercy in making no forward effort of themselves. The mottoes of this state of mind are such as the following: 'If a man is saved, what can he desire more?' 'If the work of salvation is God's work, can man improve upon it by efforts of his own?' Those who use this language forget two sayings. One is St. Paul's, to the effect that Jesus Christ "gave Himself for us, that He might purify to Himself . . . a peculiar people, zealous"—mark that—"zealous of good works."¹ And the other is St. Augustine's: "God, Who has not saved us by ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." In other words, we cannot contribute merit; we may not safely refuse co-operation. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."²

¹ Tit. ii. 14.

² Eph. ii. 8.

On the other hand, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."¹

The truth is, we ought always to be making progress; since not to be going forward is to be losing ground. Many a man in this City measures, year by year, and with satisfaction, the increase of his income; many men, I hope and think, take account of their mental growth at fixed periods of time. Why should we not be equally keen about spiritual progress? Are you and I making any progress? Are we standing still? Are we losing ground? What were our habits, one year ago, in respect of prayer, Communion, study of Holy Scripture, examination of conscience? What are they now? What had we achieved in the way of discipline of the temper, control of the tongue, control of thoughts, general and true self-mastery? What is the case now? With what degree of welcome did we look forward to death and to all that lies beyond it? How is it now? In this way we may take stock of our real acquirements, and find out how far we are "forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forward to those things that are before."

These are the twin secrets of true advance in our highest life: "forgetting those things that are behind, reaching forward to those things that are before." The past may have been, in the eyes of others, meritorious: woe to us if we think so! Our safety is to dwell only on so much of it as concerns God's mercy and our sinfulness, and to forget the rest. But to the future—the things that are before, the ground yet to be won, the faults yet to be conquered, the steeper paths and more threatening precipices which confront us as we reach, if we do reach, the summit—let us "reach forward." Especially, with St. Paul, let us keep our eye upon the true end of life—"the prize of our high calling." It lies beyond the horizon

¹ Phil. ii. 12.

of time ; beyond the vicissitudes of this state of existence ; and as we struggle towards it, it reminds us of the true greatness of our destiny, and of our weakness, if we be unassisted by our Almighty Friend.

“The prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.” It is the fixed point towards which thought and effort may always safely be directed : and each step that brings us nearer to it is a step on the true road of progress, since it is a step towards attaining our true greatness—our eternal home in the Bosom of God.

SERMON XVIII.

CONTENTMENT.¹

PHIL. iv. 11.

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

THE Epistle to the Philippians, which we have been reading in the evening service, ever since Thursday, and which we finish to-day, is good reading for the Easter season. It is the brightest, the most joyous, the most encouraging, of all the Epistles of St. Paul. When Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury was in low spirits, he would sit down and read this Epistle through; it always restored cheerfulness. Like other Epistles of the Apostle, it contains warnings, instructions, denunciations of bad examples, condemnations of false teaching. But for his own Philippians there is from first to last hardly a word of blame; he is sure of their loyalty, of their sympathies, of their love; he communes with them, as a friend who is taking friends whom he can trust into his confidence; everything glows with the tender warmth of a personal affection. The Philippians had sent him a present, which his imprisonment makes all the more welcome. He knows that it would have reached him before, if only they had had the means. It reminds him, he says, that in bygone days, when he was laying the foundations of the Church in Macedonia and Greece, the Philippian Christians alone had contributed to his support—twice, while he was at Thessalonica, their

¹ Preached at St. Paul's, on the Second Sunday after Easter, April 27, 1884.

generous subscriptions had reached him. Now he was delighted with the present which Epaphroditus had brought from them—delighted not mainly because *he* had received, but because *they* had sent it. In his eyes it was a token of their true sympathy and communion with himself in the Body of Christ. But it was much more. It was good “fruit,” in the moral sense; it was sure of a heavenly recompense; and he even offered it up to God as a sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing to Him. For himself, he could have dispensed with it. Long discipline in the School of Jesus Christ had taught him to be moderate when he was well off, and to be patient when he was in want. “I know both how to be abased” by poverty, “and I know how to abound” in wealth; “in everything and in all things I have been taught the secret of how to be full and to be hungry, how to abound and to suffer need.” “I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

St. Paul’s life, as we all know, was marked by strange vicissitudes. He had begun life as a Rabbi of consideration, in a position of great comfort and widespread influence. As the Jewish world would have said, he had recklessly thrown away these advantages, by becoming a Christian. Since his conversion, he had led a life in which, as it might have seemed, success and failure, disappointments and consolations, seasons of wearying toils and periods of comparative repose, intervals of personal security and every variety of personal danger, had strangely alternated. Yet he had throughout understood how to preserve an equal and cheerful temper; nothing came to him amiss; nothing unduly elated or depressed him; “I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

I.

When St. Paul speaks of being "content," he uses, in the original, a word which occurs nowhere else in his writings, or indeed in the New Testament. But this word, so rare with St. Paul, was in common use in all the schools of ancient Greece. Perhaps it would have been rendered more closely by "self-sufficing;" certainly that rendering would better express what the old Greeks, who had used it for centuries, meant by their own word. Their schools of philosophy, making the most of such light as nature supplied, had, in the absence of a Revelation, in some sense anticipated the teaching office of the Church; they essayed to teach men what to think and how to live. And a prominent aim of more than one of those schools was to make each man self-sufficing. A man was to find all that he wished to have in what he had and what he was. He might find it, they said, if he would, in the resources of his mind, or in his physical strength, or in his feelings, his family, his position, his occupation, his prospects, his destiny. To go beyond himself in quest of something which he did not possess was to waste energy on a fruitless enterprise; if that which could make life worth living at all was to be found anywhere, it was to be found in something which was already within each man's grasp. To have learnt this lesson was the secret of human dignity and of human happiness.

This lesson, in slightly varying forms, was repeated for some hundreds of years by the higher teachers of the ancient world. It has, of course, a great deal of truth in it; and it is especially and honourably remarkable for recognizing the fact that the human soul—or, as its exponents would probably have said, the human mind, or

the human life—is a far greater and nobler thing than any created thing external to itself. Those old heathen beheld with wonder, and not without a certain scorn, the eagerness with which man, whose full capacity for greatness, of course, they knew not, but whose greatness they did not wholly underrate, will precipitate himself out of himself into the world of sense, of outward and created things, in the hope of finding something that would give him what he as yet had not. They knew that there was something in them greater than material wealth, greater than social power, greater than public fame; and they endeavoured to teach those who would attend to them to look at home for the secret and perfection of life, and to be satisfied with what they found there.

This idea of life, of which the Stoics were the finest and most consistent exponents, has been the creed of some of the noblest of our race. But it had its fatal weakness; it bade man be not merely satisfied with his lot, but self-satisfied. It was right in saying that man could not really be the gainer by any accumulation of outward and created things around him; it was wrong in implying that there was no Being, external to man, by dependence on and by union with Whom, he would not in the depths of his secret self gain enormously. It substituted self-reliance for reliance on God; it endeavoured to make a subtle pride do duty for the supreme conviction that the satisfaction and peace of the soul can be found nowhere but in the Being Who has made it for Himself.

“Self-sufficing,” therefore, does not express what St. Paul meant by the word, so well as “content.” For he took, as was his custom, the old Greek word, and baptized it; he gave it a new value; he read, instinctively, a new meaning into it. A Christian can only be, if any-how, self-sufficing because, in a Christian, self is virtually suppressed. The old self is superseded by, absorbed in

another Self; the old faculties remain, but they are worked and wielded from a new Centre; everything is touched by the bright irradiation, by the secret inspirations of a new nature: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."¹

This great change took place in St. Paul at the decisive moment of his life which we know as his conversion, which was immediately followed by his baptism. When he says, "*I have learned to be content,*" he really used a tense which is not expressed in our version, but which implies that he is thinking of a definite time at which he mastered the lesson. "I learned"—it is needless to say when. It was at his conversion that the old self was renounced and dropped away; and, by the grace of God, a new self, modelled by the Eternal Spirit, in the likeness of Jesus Christ, was substituted for it. Before, in the secrecy of his soul, he held communion with himself alone; now he was not alone in his secret soul; since his regeneration, his soul was a temple of The Holiest, with Whom he was henceforth intimately united, and with Whom he might hold constant communion. To be content, therefore, was not for St. Paul to be content with himself,—how could he be, if he could write of his old self, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not"² It was to be content, nay, rather, entranced by the Gracious and Awful Being Who had made a temple within him, and Whose presence made other circumstances round his life matters of comparative indifference.

II.

Let us ask more particularly, at this point, what are the ingredients of Christian contentment? What are the ruling

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² Rom. vii. 18.

considerations which should make a Christian happy and thankful to be as, and what he is, and to desire no change of circumstances ?

1. A first motive is common in a large measure to St. Paul and the wiser heathen—that nothing earthly either lasts or satisfies. Now, as of old, the rich “shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him.”¹ Now, as of old, the treasure that is laid up on earth is laid up only for a while ; since “rust and moth doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal.”² Nay, more, what is merely earthly does not satisfy. Listen to the Prophet of the Return from Captivity. “Consider your ways, saith the Lord. Ye have sown much, and bring in little ; ye eat, but ye have not enough ; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink ; ye clothe you, but there is none warm ; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.”³ This is what our Lord says in other terms ; “a man’s life,” that is, his true life, “consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.”⁴ He must look elsewhere.

This easy indifference to the precise conditions of earthly life enters profoundly into the spirit of St. Paul. If a man is born a slave, and has the opportunity of freedom within his reach, he may, says the Apostle, just as well remain a slave, since it will all soon be over, and does not matter : “If thou mayest be free—use *it* rather”⁵—that is, make the best of thy present condition. In the same spirit : “Art thou loosed from a wife ? seek not a wife :” “This I say, brethren, the time is short ; it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none.”⁶ So, again, “Why do ye not rather take wrong,” than go to law before the unbelievers ? “Know ye not that we shall judge angels ?”⁷ The temper of these passages is unmistakable.

¹ Ps. xlix. 17.

² St. Matt. vi. 19.

³ Haggai i. 5, 6.

⁴ St. Luke xii. 15.

⁵ 1 Cor. vii. 21.

⁶ *Ib.* 27, 29.

⁷ *Ib.* vi. 7, 3.

All here is passing; nothing here can satisfy; why not acquiesce in whatever betides us, when all is relatively unimportant, insignificant?

2. A second motive for cherishing a contented spirit is confidence in the wise and loving Providence of God. We each are placed where we are; we have the parentage, the friends, the surroundings, the duties that we have, not by accident or chance, but by the Will of God. God is too Wise not to know all about us, and what is really best for us to be, and to have. And He is too Good not to desire our highest good; and too Powerful, desiring, not to effect it. If, then, what He has appointed for us does not seem to us the best, or even to be good, our true course is to remember that He sees further than we do, and that we shall understand Him in time, when His plans have unfolded themselves; meanwhile casting all our care upon Him, since He careth for us.¹ This is what Job did in the hour of overwhelming misfortune: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."² This is what Eli did in prospect of severest punishment: "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."³ This is the lesson which was taught us in Gethsemane—"Not My will, but Thine, be done."⁴ This was suggested to St. Paul by his firm belief in the Divine Redemption: He who died for us on the cross, cannot but do the best for us. "If God spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"⁵

3. A third motive is that a Christian in a state of grace already possesses God. "Christ is in him, the hope of glory."⁶ He knows that his body is a member of Christ, and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in him.⁷ The creature of a day, he is nevertheless, through the Divine conde-

¹ 1 St. Peter v. 7.² Job i. 21.³ 1 Sam. iii. 18.⁴ St. Luke xxii. 42. ⁵ Rom. viii. 32. ⁶ Col. i. 27. ⁷ 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19.

scension, a temple of The Eternal. "If any man love Me, My Father will love him; and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."¹ Surely, if these Divine words are real to us, we must know that nothing that is finite can really be needed to supplement this our astonishing hold upon the Infinite. No created thing can add to what we have in possessing the Creator. So David: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."² So St. Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."³ So the old prayer, familiar to some of us, after communicating at the Altar: "Behold, Lord, I possess Thee Who possessest all things: wean Thou my heart, I pray Thee, from all that is not Thyself or from Thee; in Thee alone may my heart be fixed; for Thou art my Treasure, and my Joy, and my Portion for ever."

III.

There can be no doubt that this temper of mind is the religious temper—the temper of a man who puts himself, by an act of his will, deliberately and constantly into the Hands of God. But undoubtedly, also, it suggests, in our day, an objection which some of you will perhaps have already anticipated.

'This doctrine of contentedness with our lot in life is the foe,' so we are told, 'of social improvement. It is a theory of life suited only to recluses, or it is a doctrine which privilege has long ago devised in order to drug the healthy sense of injustice which the unprivileged ought to feel.' Discontent is said to be useful in promoting social improvement, by generating disturbances which command the attention of rulers, just as scepticism is said

¹ St. John xiv. 23.

² Ps. lxxiii. 24.

³ St. John vi. 68.

to be necessary to secure intellectual progress, by stimulating the inquiry which ultimately achieves it. 'Without the leverage of discontent, society will stagnate in all the accumulations of ancient anomaly and corruption; and to sap this useful and fertilizing agency by a theory of conduct which represents it as immoral or irreligious is to do a serious injury to the social or public life of mankind.'

Is it indeed so? Is the world so constituted that man can only be improved by the agency of that which is evil or disastrous? Must some truth be denied before we can make a step forward in knowledge? Must we necessarily rebel against the arrangements of Divine Providence if the conditions of human life are to be bettered? Is Satan, after all, so indispensable a personage that we are obliged to depend, at any rate to a certain extent, upon him, when we too are trying, in our poor way, to cast out Satan?

No, brethren! this objection involves a confusion between the good which Almighty and Overruling Goodness may extract from the workings of evil, and the direct consequences to which evil, by the force of its own nature and impetus, always leads. But let us know what we mean by discontent.

As there is scepticism and scepticism, so there is discontent and discontent. The scepticism which holds doubt to be of itself a virtue is a very different thing from the intellectual honesty which will not be satisfied by worthless evidence. The discontent which is roused by the wrongs of others, and which has no motive in the background to sully its disinterestedness, is not to be confounded with the vulgar temper of disappointed ambition, which thinks everything wrong in public life because nothing falls out in accordance with private schemes for securing wealth or honour. Tindal and Chubb were inquirers in one sense, Bishop Butler in another; and

discontent with existing arrangements was represented by Howard, the philanthropist, after one fashion, and after another—well, by Lord George Gordon.

Nor is the objector right as to what he holds to be the most potent factors in improvement, whether intellectual or social.

Negations do not fertilize. It is the hearty recognition of one truth which leads us on to recognize another; and the true, inspiring principle of social progress is not the selfishness of discontent, but the active charity of self-renunciation. Nay, more; as the mental temper, which doubts because it fancies that doubt is always rational, means in the end that widespread apathy and ruin in the world of thought which is the product of intellectual despair,—so discontent, which quarrels with everything around it, only because self is unable to satisfy some petty personal ambition—this also, sooner or later, means ruin, whether in the private or social life of man.

We see the truth of this at different points in the social scale.

Look at that clerk. He is the trusted adviser of a great firm; he has an income which enables him to keep his family in something more than comfort; he can lay by something every year, and he has a pension in view when he becomes too old to work. He might end his days happily if he would be content with his position; but, unhappily for himself, he has caught sight of some stratum of social existence which is just above him, and into which he can find his way, as he thinks, by a short cut. So, as he has access to securities which are entrusted to the care of his employers, he will speculate a little with them on his own account; and he hopes that he shall have made his money and shall have been enabled to replace them before they are wanted. But the money-market is like the atmosphere; it has its governing laws,

no doubt, but it is swayed also by influences upon which we cannot calculate ; and, accordingly, either the speculation does not succeed, or the securities are wanted before they are producible. Then new and newer shifts become necessary, involving, at every step, greater elements of financial risk, in order to conceal the breach of trust or to delay the too probably impending catastrophe, until, some fine day, delay and concealment are no longer possible. And then the confidence and character, which it has taken half a lifetime to earn and build up, and the comfort of a home, and the happiness of near relatives, all dissolve amid the exposures of a court of justice ; and the law echoes a sentence, which had been previously pronounced in the court of conscience, when it at length draws a veil over this sad scene of ruin by a penalty which is required for the protection of society.

Or look at that mother ; she has daughters whom she wishes to marry well, and with this object, she is preparing to encounter the fatigues of a London season. The daughters might marry easily in their own station, but then this girl has some lines of beauty, or some brightness of character, or grace, or accomplishment that is all her own, and the mother thinks that the occasion may be improved if the daughter can only marry an income or a coronet ! I say an income or a coronet, for if she succeeds, that too probably is what she does marry—that, and not a human heart—a human soul. What is more beautiful or more sacred in human life than the union of two souls, in a reciprocal and perfect affection consecrated by a tie which the Eternal Truth, Jesus our Lord, has told us is, if once contracted, strictly indissoluble in the sight of heaven, unless there have been some previous and unacknowledged act that should have vitiated the contract ? What is more beautiful when it is indeed a union of hearts, what more hideous, what more prolific of misery and sin, than when

those secret sanctities of our human nature are degraded to the vulgar level of a social or commercial transaction, in which a heart is sold for an estate or a title? Who can wonder if such enterprises bring in their train the saddest of our modern degradations,—if after a few years of ill-concealed wretchedness some catastrophe or crime leads to an exposure before the tribunal, whose very existence among us brands our modern civilization with disgrace?

Or look at discontent at the other end of society. Here is some lecturer, perhaps, who tells us in so many words that it is a sacred duty to propagate discontent among the poor. He has a notion that, in virtue of some original right, the land of a country ought to be equally divided among all the human beings who live in it, and that a large estate in land is really a theft consecrated by time and law. Of course a doctrine like this is welcome to some of us who do not possess a foot of land, and who would like to have some; but, for all that, it is in opposition to the facts of nature and thus to the Will of God. The inequalities of property are a necessary and constant result of two permanent facts in human life. The first fact is that the productive power of individual men is unequal; the second that the numbers in different families are unequal. These two facts operate necessarily to produce inequalities in property; so necessarily that, if by any possibility you could redistribute property in this country quite equally among all its inhabitants to-morrow morning, you would find, before the end of the week, that the irrepressible reign of inequality had begun again. But this, which is the elementary common-sense of Economical Science, is not always obvious to lecturers or hearers on these topics; and, as a consequence, the latter are not unlikely to think that discontent at the inequalities of property is little less than a form of pure moral or even religious enthusiasm. God forbid that we should forget

that property has responsibilities as well as, or even rather than rights attached to it; and that if it has been acquired upon conditions which time or events have cancelled, the moral equivalents of those conditions do and must remain! Many stern and true things may be said about property which forgets this; but the existence of property in unequal portions is a necessary result of God's appointments in nature, and the discontent which would quarrel with this inequality is anti-social discontent; it can only lead, in the long run, to a harvest of violence and misery and wrong.

Let us be sure of this: that the lesson which St. Paul learnt—to be content in our state of life—is a secret of true present and future happiness. What is it that makes a man happy? Is it the acquisition of anything, I care not what it be, external to himself? Is it the exercise of any intellectual faculty? Is it the successful pursuit of any occupation, at least in and for itself? We know, too well, if we know anything of life, how these questions must be answered. We are happy when desire and affection are centred on a worthy object. This men instinctively feel when often they retire from the public walks of life, and seek happiness in the bosom of their families; that which no success, no wealth, no reputation could command, is, within measure, found in the strong and pure affections of the home. But the human home at its best—with the father's authority, and the mother's love, and the child's responsive obedience—is a faint earthly shadow of Divine things beyond the range of sense; and upon these, or rather upon Him in Whom they centre, desire should be fixed, if man is to be really happy.

And thus we see how the Tenth Commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," is an echo of the first, "Thou shalt have none other Gods but Me." If desire is to be concentrated on the highest good, it must be restrained from lavishing

itself upon a thousand trifles that sparkle incessantly before it. The devotion of the heart to God, means detachment from the created objects which would draw it away from God. The fewer earthly wants a man has, the easier it is for him to enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and the solid happiness which that peace confers. Existing natural ties have their claims: but it is wise, from the highest point of view, not to add to them. The fewer pledges we give to this world, the easier it is to sit lightly to it. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."¹ "If any man forsake not (at least in desire) all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."² "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou hast set my heart at liberty."³ And this happiness here—the happiness of a mind, peaceful and contented because centred in God—surely means happiness hereafter. Souls are wrecked by the turbulent insurrections of discontent with God's appointments: they are saved by the faith which knows "Whom it has believed, and is confident that He will keep that which is committed to Him."⁴ "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches."⁵ The youngest and the strongest of us are already on the threshold of another life; and what we shall be and enjoy there will depend on what we have done to discipline and concentrate desire while here. To have learnt in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content, is to have learnt one secret of that life in which "they rest not day and night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy."⁶

¹ St. Matt. v. 3.² St. Luke xiv. 33.³ Ps. cxix. 32.⁴ 2 Tim. i. 12.⁵ Prov. xiii. 7.⁶ Rev. iv. 8.

his Mission to the Stone. 21st Sept. 1900. 4 Nov^r 1900.
notes kept.
Lamb. & Carborough. 15 Sept 1901.

SERMON XIX.

THE CHRISTIAN VENTURE.¹

2 TIM. i. 12.

I know Whom I have believed: and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

WHEN St. Paul wrote this sentence, he was already in full view of the last scenes of his eventful life. For the second time he was imprisoned at Rome, and it was easy to see that this second imprisonment would not end as the first. It needed no inspired Apostle to foretell that a tragic death would close a life such as his had been in a city such as Rome was, and under such a ruler as the Emperor Nero. Already a storm was rising. The folly, the caprice, the cruelty of Nero, naturally issued in acts such as was the burning of large quarters of the city for his personal amusement; and when the popular indignation, raised to madness, demanded a victim on which to expend itself, it was natural for a cowardly and unprincipled despot to point to the Christians, and especially to their recognized leader. This is what actually happened; and it was no doubt guessed to be inevitable by St. Paul, though he also may well have had higher intimations of the exact fate which was awaiting him. Thus it was that, at the time of writing this his last Letter, he was looking forward to death with that sort of buoyant resignation with which its recognized nearness would

¹ Preached (on behalf of the Guards' Industrial Home), in the Military Chapel, Birdcage Walk, London, on Trinity Sunday, May 23, 1880.

naturally inspire a man who had been for years living in preparation for it. "I know Whom I have believed: and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

I.

In this language we are struck first of all with the way of treating life which it brings before us. "That which I have committed unto Him"—this is St. Paul's way of describing his life. For St. Paul, life is a venture; it is a great venture. It is staked without reserve upon the truth of the Christian Creed. For St. Paul life is an investment; it is surrendered, in whatever sense, that it may be recovered with something that is better and less measured than interest; and the Apostle is persuaded that in surrendering it thus he is well advised. "I know Whom I have believed," he says, "and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

During the greater part of our time here, we, most of us, take our existence as a matter of course; but there are hours when its wonder and its mystery burst upon us. "Why should I be here," a man says to himself, "when the world would have been as complete without me? Why should I be here, with this understanding, with these affections, with this free, self-determining will, with a thousand capacities for enjoyment, with an instinct of dreadful and magnificent possibilities beyond all that I can see and feel? Why should I be here, entrusted with this apparatus of life?" As a man thinks this over, it comes across him to ask himself once or twice or more, it may be, another question: "What shall I do with it?"

It may, indeed, be thought that for the great majority of men this question is answered before it can be asked;

that it is answered by circumstances. Circumstances, if we might reverently say it, are the Fingers of Almighty God. Through them He takes possession of us at our first entrance into life, and gives us our portion, and moulds us, or lets us be moulded, into what we are; and so we seem to be at once their product and their subjects—many men would add, their victims. Circumstances! Yes, they seem to rise on this and that side of life's pathway, like the high rocks of a narrow defile, which forbid any movement but in one direction; or they even confront us, as we employ the little freedom that they had seemingly permitted, bidding us advance no further, or even condemning us, as we think, to absolute impotence! Loss of friends, loss of means, bad health, sinister influences—these, like the sons of Zeruiah, are too strong and too numerous to be resisted by David;¹ and, as we fall down or fall back before them, we say to ourselves that man's freedom to dispose of his life is one of the many illusions of his self-love, and that he is really only a more subtle illustration than are lower creatures of the universal empire of circumstances.

No, brethren, this is not true; at the most there is in it but an element of truth. Circumstances are everything in the life of an animal; they go for very much in the life of a man; but they are not everything. They may seem to hedge in the path of life, but they are not insurmountable. They may seem to cramp freedom of action; but they always leave a margin within which the human soul is free. This is the glory and distinction of human beings—that they are not, except willingly, the slaves of circumstance; that they can resist and control a force which masters the mere brute. Even the old heathen, or some of them, knew that the human soul might always within limits be free; that prisons and fetters could not deprive

¹ 2 Sam. iii. 39.

it of its true liberty; that political misfortune could not bend the will of Cato, nor threatened torture, the noble resolve of Regulus; and in this they did but anticipate the Gospel. St. Paul says that a slave who, in the eye of the ancient Law, had no rights whatever, and who was treated, to use a classical expression, as a mere piece of animated furniture, was yet, if a Christian, the freed man of Christ;¹ that although he could call neither his time nor his movements, nor his very limbs, his own, and had to regulate every word and look by the will of a capricious master, yet, in the inmost sanctuary of his spirit, he was free; free so that none could rob him of his freedom; free to think, to aspire, to resolve, to pray; free to commune with the invisible world and with the Unseen King of all spirits and all flesh; doubly free because enfranchised by the Redeemer of men, and withal so far from dreading death as a menace to his liberty, that he welcomes it as the gate to a freedom which will then, for the first time, be perfect.

We can, then—within certain limits, at any rate—answer each one of us for himself the question, “What shall I do with my life?”

And the many answers which are given to that question, resolve themselves, in principle, into two.

The first is something to this effect. ‘I will do nothing in particular with it. I will let matters drift. I have no distinct object; and all effort is unwelcome. If nothing is done, all may, after all, come right.’

What is this, brethren, but a renunciation of the prerogatives of man? Man, as we have seen, can direct the course of his life; why should he let himself drift as if he were but a raft floating upon the current of time without any purpose, as if he were a feather carried by the wind to rest he knows not where or when? No, this

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 22.

is not even human common sense ; if we can dispose of life, we must do so.

A second answer runs thus : ‘ While I have it I will make the best of it. It gives me many opportunities of present enjoyment : I will turn them to account. I will extract from the moments as they pass as many pleasurable sensations as they can be made to yield. There will be an end to this, I know ; pleasure soon palls, and time passes with relentless speed. But I will do as the old pagan bids ;¹ I will snatch joyfully the gifts which the present hour offers me, and will leave stern questions about the future to take care of themselves.’

This is the life which was lived, almost without exception, by the old heathen world before Christ came, and it is the life which is lived by thousands upon thousands of Christians for whom He has shed His Blood, and who have been made His members in their Baptism. It would not be a wise or noble life, if there were no death, no judgment, no heaven, no hell ; it would not make the best of the faculties—the higher faculties of the soul and heart of man. But, placed in the light of all that Christ has told us about what is before every one of us, it is most assuredly simple madness. The brave officers who were dancing in Brussels on the eve of Waterloo did not know until they were summoned from the ballroom to hurry to the front what a fearful struggle was immediately awaiting them ; but every Christian knows that the most solemn of all events, death, is possible at any moment ; and that a life which is lived without any reference to what may follow, is, to say the least, unspeakably reckless.

A third answer to the question, What shall I do with my life ? is this : ‘ I will give it to God.’

¹ “ *Dona præsentis rape lætus horæ et Linque severa.*”—Horace, Odes, III. viii. 27, 28.

My brethren, there is a justice about this answer which you cannot mistake. If any Being has a claim on your lives, God has one. He gave you existence; He enables you to exist from day to day, from hour to hour, from moment to moment; He has by His Son repaired the ruin, and has by His Spirit invigorated the weakness which had, through man's own folly, disfigured His work. In giving your life to Him, you restore that which is already His own; you satisfy the sense of justice.

There is a justice, I say, about this way of disposing of life, and there is something more: there is a chivalry about it. For God appeals to us, not merely as our Great Benefactor Who has claims on the score of justice against us which we can never wipe out; He would also win our hearts as the Uncreated Beauty, Whose Youth is unfading and eternal, and of Whose faultless splendours whatever is fairest on earth can present but the faintest shadow. Nay, He even permits us to be of service to Him—to be, in sacred language, His fellow-workers;¹ He makes His cause in the world and in the hearts of men dependent upon our loyalty; and thus He appeals to the enterprise as well as the chivalry of our natures when He asks us to give ourselves to Him.

This, then, is the venture or investment of which I was speaking just now, and which a Christian makes: which in his day and generation, to the incalculable gain of Christendom then and since, St. Paul did make in his own noble way. He made it at his conversion. Conversion means a turning—a turning of the inmost being of man, away from created things to God, the Author and the End of life. St. Paul's question, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"² addressed to our Lord Jesus Christ, marks the first step in this great change; and when St. Paul had begun, it was not the way of an intense and thorough character

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

² Acts ix. 6.

like his, to do things by halves; he gave himself to God's guidance and disposal without reserve. He felt that he was not his own; he was bought with a price.¹ He felt that Christ had died for all, with this purpose among others, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him That died for them."² St. Paul knew himself to be the property of a Divine Master, to be disposed of as He might choose; and his life was laid out, until he surrendered it in martyrdom, on that principle. His intellect, his will, his affections, his time, his movements, his home, his reputation, his prospects,—all were abandoned into the Hands of God; all are included in the single word which is translated, "that which I have committed to Him."

This idea of life, as a thing voluntarily given to God, has from that day until this shaped, and does at this very moment shape, the existence of a very large number of earnest Christians. Even where no great change in the outward habits and associations of life is possible, all is changed within. The whole world of motive is lifted into a higher atmosphere. Common duties are ennobled by being offered to God. Little acts of self-sacrifice may proceed from a temper which under other circumstances would be capable of heroism; and nothing is or can be commonplace upon which the mark of consecration to Christ has been deliberately traced, by a pure intention of giving whatever there is to give to the Author and Redeemer of our life.

With this, the Christian side of life, a soldier must have sympathy, since it is also, in a very distinct sense, his own. You, too, my brethren, who have entered the Queen's service, have made a noble venture. You hold your lives, subject not merely to the ordinary contingencies of disease or accident which await us all, whether soldiers

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

² 2 Cor. v. 15.

or civilians; you have undertaken to expose yourselves to dangers from which other men are generally free, for the defence of your country. It is sometimes said that with the advance of civilization the profession of a soldier will fall into disrepute among mankind; but they who so speak know little of the deepest motives that stir the hearts of men. We may, indeed, and must trust, that in future years, human blood will be less recklessly shed than it has been in the past, and that the quarrels of nations will be settled by an appeal to reason and justice more often than by the sword. But until the whole human race is brought under the influence of principles which as yet influence only a small fraction of it, injustice supported by force will have in the last resort, and in the interests of general morality, to be repelled by force; and they who hold life and comfort cheap that they may protect the defenceless, will always be held by that which is best in the heart and judgment of mankind to do a noble work. For a work is noble which bears on it the mark of sacrifice; the measure of true nobility in all human employments is afforded by the sacrifice of self that they severally involve; and the day is therefore far distant when men will cease to put high honour on the great profession which lays us all under obligations by its conspicuous surrender of joys which men hold most dear. It is indeed the spirit of chivalrous sacrifice, joined to the instincts of subordination and order, which explains the high distinction that is awarded to soldiers in the New Testament. Our Lord Himself turned from learned scribes and doctors to the simple captain of a band in the Roman army, whose faith, He said, was greater than any that He had as yet found in Israel.¹ It was the regular, self-denying life of Cornelius that smoothed the way to his conversion, and that engaged the warm interest of the Apostle St. Peter;²

¹ St. Matt. viii. 5-13.

² Acts x. 1-33.

and it is difficult to think that when St. Paul is writing his Epistle to the Ephesians, while chained to a private in the Roman guards, and, at the end of that Epistle, describes the graces of a Christian life by a series of metaphors which are drawn from the dress of his involuntary companion, he does not mean to recognize the points of correspondence and sympathy which bind the soldiers of an earthly sovereign to those whom he himself calls "the soldiers of Jesus Christ."¹ This, at any rate, is common to them; that their lives are alike stamped with the note of sacrifice; that they have equally committed to Another's keeping the best that they had to give.

II.

And here we come to a further point which the words before us suggest—I mean the warrant for thus making life over to God, after the fashion of St. Paul. That in doing so we satisfy a sense of justice, and gratify an instinct of chivalry, has been already said; but what is there to show that it may not be, as we should say, Quixotic, as are many acts and courses of conduct which are undertaken in obedience to a single impulse? After all, this present life is, in its way, a reality; while all beyond it is, if not conjecture, at most anticipation. What, then, is the reason for the course proposed; the reason which does warrant a man in giving up that which is within his grasp for something which is, as it may seem, incalculably beyond it? The answer is found in what the Christian soul knows about God: "I know Whom I have believed." Because He is what He is, "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

Of the tragedies which are scattered up and down the

¹ Eph. vi. 10-17 : 2 Tim. ii. 3.

pages of human history, none shock us so greatly or so reasonably as those which are due to an abuse of confidence. What is it that we all remember in the story of the murder of Cæsar? Is it not the words, "And thou, too, Brutus?" The great Roman held his own amid the crowd of assassins, till he saw this friend of so many years raise his dagger to strike him; and then, after the exclamation of sorrow and reproach, he folded his face in his robe, and sank upon the pavement of the Senate House. Cæsar did not know Brutus. What is it that reveals, more clearly than anything else in his career, the selfishness of the First Napoleon, but the divorce of the wife whom he had married in early days when she brought him position and money, the wife who had always been true to him, the wife whom he only set aside when a calculated self-interest suggested an alliance with an imperial race? Josephine did not know Bonaparte. Nay, when does human nature show itself in its most repulsive aspects in the story of the Passion of our Lord? Not when it nails His blessed Hands and Feet to the tree of shame; not when it mocks, and spits at, and scourges Him; not even when, in its ingratitude or its weakness, it deserts or denies Him. The soldiers, the multitude, the chief priests and rulers of the people, Peter in the courtyard—these are bad in their way, but what are they to Judas in the garden? The darkest trait in the whole history of the Passion is the repetition of a treachery, of which David had complained in a bygone age, and which was repeated towards Jesus by an Apostle, who had been admitted to enjoy that Divine companionship. "It is not an open enemy that hath done me this dishonour, for then I could have borne it; but it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and my own familiar friend."¹ Jesus did know Judas, and foretold His betrayal, as the

¹ Ps. lv. 12, 14.

masterpiece of man's unfaithfulness. "I know Whom I have believed." St. Paul has no doubt about the faithfulness of God. Nor has any true Christian any doubt about it. His confidence is based on knowledge: partly on the knowledge which is a gift of faith, and partly on the knowledge which is acquired through experience.

(a) To-day is Trinity Sunday—the great day on which, beyond any other day in the year, we recall what God has told us, in His condescension, about His Inmost Nature. Those great facts which we confess in the Creed are for serious Christians much more real and interesting than any which we merely see, or feel, or smell, with our bodily senses. "There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost:" "the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one;" "They are not three Gods but One God." What is this but a warrant for the confidence which leads a true Christian to commit his life to God? We might well hesitate to commit it to a mere First Cause, to a heartless Intelligence, to an infinitely distant and abstract Being. But now we Christians do thus know the Father, Who has made us and all mankind—not because He foresaw anything in us which would repay Him, but out of pure love which thus found its vent. And we do thus know the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and died on the Cross, thus buying us for a happiness which else had been irrecoverably lost, at the price of His Precious Blood. And thus we do know the Holy Ghost, the Divine visitor Who breathes in our hearts and minds a light and warmth which they never else could have, and so prepares us for that eternal home which is beyond the grave. We know God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and this is the reason of our confidence. We say to ourselves, He has told us what He is, what He has done for us, and He

does not change. He is what He was when He spoke to man in Galilee eighteen centuries ago; He will be what He is everlastingly. And, therefore, if any of His reasonable creatures commits into His Hands all that makes life what it is, as a trust for eternity; if a venture is made which gives up this world for the sake of the next: if the Divine foolishness of the gospel message is taken seriously now as of old, the result will not be failure or disappointment. "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

(β) This is the teaching of the faith; and it is also, in thousands of Christian lives, as it was in St. Paul's case, the teaching of experience. As the years pass, a Christian acquires for himself an experimental sense of the faithfulness of God. He may have given up something, even much; he knows that he has received more. The gifts which have been repaid into his bosom are already sevenfold more than that which he gave freely into the Hands of God; he is more certain of having that which he has surrendered than of retaining that which he seems to have. The reason is, because he gets to know more and more of God as time passes. God is to him less and less a Name, a distant Being of Whom he reads in books, and more and more a Friend, awful and incomprehensible, no doubt, yet also most tender, and condescending, and abundantly considerate, with Whose character and ways—I had almost dared to say, with Whose Countenance—He becomes increasingly familiar. Many and various are the steps and stages by which this fuller knowledge has been gained. To St. Paul it came sometimes in the ecstasy of prayer, sometimes in the joy of spiritual conquest, but also sometimes when all seemed dark and unpromising, or even worse. God makes Himself known in the storm as in the sunshine; we all remember some moments, if they

be only few, when the light of heaven has seemed to shine even upon us. There was that conversation with a friend whom we can never again see in this life: there was that Communion, so illuminated by our sense of nearness to the Unseen, as to be unlike any we had received before. But there was also that overwhelming shock, which woke up all the soul's faculties into a new and awful capacity for realizing what is beyond the touch of sense. There was that illness, so trying to flesh and blood, so humiliating and enfeebling, so full of distraction and of pain, but in which God spoke, at times too clearly to be misunderstood, and bathed the soul in floods of light, which has never since been wholly forfeited.

It was at the close of a life rich in personal experience that St. Paul exclaimed, "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

A soldier, I have already said, understands, or ought to understand, a good Christian, because the two have this great principle in common—that they each of them treat life as a venture deliberately made. The Christian knows Who and What God is, and he surrenders much or all which other men hold dear at God's bidding. The soldier, too, makes over his life, or, at any rate, his comfort and personal safety, because he too has a knowledge which warrants this act of confidence. What is it? If he is a good man, no doubt he believes, and rightly, that he is spending his life in a way of which God approves, and he trusts God accordingly. But that is not the whole of his case; he confides also in his Queen, or in that which she represents, his country. He is persuaded that that which he has committed to the keeping of his countrymen is not misplaced; he says to himself, "For my country's sake, I have given up comfort and home, and, it may be, for her I shall shed my blood; and meanwhile I make an act of

trust in her—in her justice rather than in her generosity—I commit to her care my children.”

Those of us who are not soldiers cannot but feel the reasonableness of this, or, I would rather say, its pathetic force. We are, for the time being, to the soldier what the Divine Providence is to the Christian—an object of confidence.

Every charitable association may be regarded as at once the shadow and the instrument of the Providence of God; but those which provide for the relatives of men who are engaged in the Public Service have the additional character of warranting the confidence which a soldier places in his countrymen. It is on this ground that I venture to recommend very warmly to your attention and support the “Guards’ Industrial Home.” It represents a charitable enterprise, admirable in its conception, and, so far as I can ascertain, no less admirable in the manner of its being carried out. It educates, clothes, and supports the daughters of non-commissioned officers and men of the Brigade of Guards; it secures for them sound Religious instruction, and it provides, as far as may be, for their becoming good and useful members of society as daughters and mothers of families. It thus satisfies the twofold object of every good charity: it prevents a great deal of evil, and it achieves a great deal of positive good. What would be, think you, the fate, in too many instances, of these daughters of our soldiers, unless a kindly hand thus secured for them in their early years the guidance and discipline of a Christian home? What blessings may they not bring back with them to their fathers and brothers, if we can teach them something of the beauty, and purity, and tenderness, and strength of a true Christian life? Such a charitable effort as this is a worthy reply to the soldier’s plea that he gives up much which would have enabled him, as a civilian, to secure a happy and useful future for his children, because he puts his trust in the just and

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generous feelings of his countrymen, especially of those among them who own and worship the Name of Jesus Christ. Let us try this afternoon to show him that his confidence is not misplaced. Let us remember that, if Christianity is a reality to us, "we know Whom we have believed," and have no fear of being disappointed, when, at the last, we claim our deposit in the Eternal World. And let us, while we may, do what we can to justify the confidence of which we are ourselves the objects, and which warrants and sustains self-sacrifice, not less in the good soldier than in the good Christian.

THE END.

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